

2 Linking the Global with the Local: A Village Crafted by the Slave Trade

2.1 “When our parents came here, it was not themselves who wanted to come here”

It has already been stated in the introduction that Nkholongue’s formation was strongly linked to the slave trade. The village came into existence when the ancestors of the present chief settled here around 1880. They originally came from a place called Unango in the highlands east of the lake. Nkholongue’s elite not only used the village as a transit point for slaves, but also bought slaves for their own needs and settled them in Nkholongue. It is their descendants who today make up the majority of the village’s population. Two older sisters described this process as follows in one of my first interviews in 2010:

When our parents came here, it was not themselves who wanted to come here. Nor did they flee from a war in Nkhotakota. No, at that time, [...] it was something else that happened that we cannot know ourselves.¹

Nkholongue’s origins in the slave trade are not only still visible in the current social structure of the village, but also still “audible.” The Chinyanja dialect of the villagers, especially of the older ones, still differs markedly from that spoken in other villages of the region. While people in Metangula pronounce the Chinyanja word for fish as *nchomba*, those from Nkholongue say *nsomba*.² Older people in Nkholongue do not speak the actual Chinyanja of the lakeshore. They speak what they call Chimarimba, a dialect named after the region of Marimba, the ancient name of the Nkhotakota area on the other side of the lake in what is now Malawi.

This chapter attempts to uncover the local ongoing of the slave trade, something most people were reluctant to talk about. Looking at Nkholongue’s origins in the slave trade, this chapter examines a part of the “internal” dimension of Africa’s

1 PA, I004: interview with P0147 (♀, ~1928), P0129 (♀, 1930) (Nkholongue, August 25, 2010), min 00:30:36–00:31:00.

2 *Nsomba* is also used in the area south of Nkholongue. However, this is the result of a more recent development due to the fact that many of the people living there were refugees in Malawi during the War of Independence and the Civil War. Other features of the dialect of Nkholongue, such as intonation, differ from those of other villages in the south. On this point, see also: PA, I150: interview with P1483 (♀, 1950), P1481 (♂, 1954) (Lussefa, June 15, 2016), min 00:32:16–00:33:12.

slavery. In doing so, the chapter has four objectives. The first is to complicate the "slavery-to-kinship continuum," which is still considered by many to be a characteristic feature of African slavery. Second, this chapter aims to bring the study of slavery to a region for which the topic has been little explored so far. Third, by focusing on a concrete and illustrative example, this chapter hopes to contribute to the popularization of the knowledge about the complicated effects of the slave trade inside the African continent, which remains limited and has arguably even trended downward in recent years. Last but not least, this chapter intends to show how the local realities of Nkholongue have been shaped by global processes from the very beginning.

As for the first objective, the chapter connects to a long-standing discussion on African slavery going back to the 1970s and the work of Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff. Focusing on the differences between slavery systems in Africa and those in the Americas, Miers and Kopytoff interpreted slavery in Africa as a much milder form than its American counterpart. Amongst other things, they highlighted the ease with which a slave could be integrated into kinship groups, describing this process as the "slavery-to-kinship continuum."³ Their analysis contrasted with concurrent studies by other scholars such as Claude Meillassoux, who emphasized the exploitative and coercive character of slave labor, or Antony Hopkins who highlighted the economic motivations for its use.⁴ At the end of the 1970s, the "slavery-to-kinship continuum" was critically discussed in two important review articles by Martin Klein and Frederick Cooper. They both argued for the need to continue the analysis of economic exploitation and not to forget the coercive mechanisms inherent in the process of slavery. Cooper, in particular, argued for avoiding the dangers of ahistoricity and essentialization that he saw in previous approaches, and especially in that of Miers and Kopytoff.⁵ In his own work, he showed how a plantation system based on slavery developed in parts of Africa during the 19th century that was not so dissimilar to its counterparts in the Americas.⁶

3 Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977).

4 Claude Meillassoux, ed., *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: François Maspero, 1975); Antony G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1973), 23–27.

5 Cooper's piece was generally more critical, that of Klein more appreciative. See: Frederick Cooper, "The Problem of Slavery in African Studies," *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 1 (1979): 103–125; Martin A. Klein, "The Study of Slavery in Africa," *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 4 (1978): 599–609.

6 Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). Such studies were also made for West Africa, a recent and comprehensive example being: Mohammed Bashir Salau, *The West African Slave Plantation: A Case Study* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

In the early 1980s, Paul Lovejoy reinforced the need for historical analyses in his synthesis with his “transformation thesis,” arguing that the previously existing forms of slavery and the whole course of African history were transformed by the expansion of the Atlantic slave trade.⁷

In spite of these criticisms, the idea of a “slavery-to-kinship continuum” has continued to be seen as a distinctive feature of slavery in Africa, as Gareth Austin has recently noted.⁸ The experience from Nkhlongue seems to confirm the view that slaves (or at least their descendants) assimilated into the slave-owning communities at first glance. However, this chapter will highlight important reservations and also some modifications to what Cooper has called the “absorptionist analysis.”⁹ First, the proximity to the experiences of concrete individuals will hopefully sharpen the view that any integration into one kinship unit was only possible through the violent separation from another. Second, this chapter points to the danger of a teleological analysis: social homogenization did occur in Nkhlongue at some time, but we have too little information to say whether it would have occurred to the same degree without abolition. Several sources indicate the contempt with which Nkhlongue’s slave trading chief looked upon his slaves. Furthermore, internal and external slave trade cannot be separated as neatly as is sometimes assumed. The evidence relating to Nkhlongue shows that they not only resulted from the same process and occurred in the same location but could also involve the same individuals. The dividing line between slaves in transit and permanently settled slaves was most probably quite fluid. Last but not least, cultural assimilation in Nkhlongue was not a one-way-street. In the long run, it was the descendants of the slaveholders who began to speak the language and, following my findings in Chapter 3, also the religion of their (former) slaves. This may have been primarily a result of abolition, but it still gives us reason to doubt the uni-linearity of such processes in general.¹⁰

With regard to the second objective of the chapter, other scholars have highlighted the lack of studies on the history of slavery in the region, even if I would not go so far as Liazzat Bonate to say that “[t]he internal, local social history of slavery in northern Mozambique is yet to be written[.]”¹¹ In fact, there are some

7 Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

8 Gareth Austin, “Slavery in Africa, 1804–1936,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, ed. David Eltis et al., vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 180.

9 Cooper, “The Problem of Slavery in African Studies,” 104.

10 Austin, “Slavery in Africa,” 180.

11 Liazzat Bonate, “Traditions and Transitions: Islam and Chiefship in Northern Mozambique ca. 1850–1974” (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2007), 53. Malyn Newitt has formulated this

existing studies such as Nancy Hafkin's on the coastal areas and those by Edward Alpers and Benigna Zimba on the interior.¹² In particular, Alpers' work on the trade among the Wayao is of interest and value. He has pointed to important questions concerning the effects of the trade on local society, arguing that the growing importance of the slave trade facilitated the rise of large territorial chiefdoms.¹³ His work, however, can be criticized for focusing too much on the two Yao chiefdoms of Mataka and Makanjira. This limitation, it must be conceded, was a consequence of the limited sources available to him. With the Wayao of Unango, this chapter aims to draw attention to actors in the slave trade who have so far largely escaped the attention of historians. Another new aspect is that this and the following two chapters also address the history of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery in northern Mozambique, a topic that has received scant attention in relation to this region.

Concerning the third objective of the chapter, it can be noted that the popularization of the knowledge of the history of slavery within the African continent has lagged behind that of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the Americas, even within academia outside the circumscribed field of the specialists. An edited volume on slavery in Africa from 2013 highlighted this fact, saying that "[u]nbe-knownst to most, more slaves were probably kept within Africa than were ever exported."¹⁴ This lack of popularization can be explained, at least in part, by the

argument less radically and, in my opinion, more correctly: Malyn Newitt, "Michel Cahen's Review of a Short History of Mozambique: Some Thoughts," *Lusotopie* 17, no. 1 (2018): 170.

12 Nancy Hafkin, "Trade, Society, and Politics in Northern Mozambique, c.1753–1913" (PhD thesis, Boston, Boston University, 1973); Edward A. Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves in East Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Edward A. Alpers, "Trade, State, and Society among the Yao in the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 405–420; Benigna Zimba, "Slave Trade and Slavery in Southeastern Africa: Interviews and Images," in *Slave Routes and Oral Tradition in Southeastern Africa*, ed. Benigna Zimba, Edward Alpers, and Allen Isaacman (Maputo: Filsom, 2005), 295–335. See as well the overview by Eduardo Medeiros and the recent publication by Palmer and Newitt on the manuscripts of the British Consul Henry O'Neill: Eduardo Medeiros, *As etapas da escravatura no norte de Moçambique* (Maputo: AHM, 1988); Hilary C. Palmer and Malyn Newitt, *Northern Mozambique in the Nineteenth Century: The Travels and Explorations of H.E. O'Neill* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

13 Alpers, "Trade, State, and Society."

14 Alice Bellagamba, Sandra E. Greene, and Martin A. Klein, "Introduction. When the Past Shadows the Present: The Legacy in Africa of Slavery and the Slave Trade," in *The Bitter Legacy: African Slavery Past and Present*, ed. Alice Bellagamba, Sandra E. Greene, and Martin A. Klein (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2013), 2. This has also led some historians to conclude that the study of Africa's internal slave trade and slavery has always been neglected. See: Benjamin W. Kankpeyeng, "The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana: Landmarks, Legacies and Connections," *Slavery & Abolition* 30, no. 2 (2009): 209–221.

ambivalent relationship of historiography to this politically charged topic.¹⁵ The resurgent national historiography of the 1960s was not eager to highlight “internal” divisions,¹⁶ while the impetus to find African slavery as a milder form of unfree labor was certainly also driven in order to challenge the old claims of the European civilizing mission. The neglect of knowledge popularization about slavery in Africa has arguably even been reinforced in recent years by the popularity of postcolonial theory at Western universities, in that it has reconsolidated the old emphasis on European agency and African victimhood (see also my comments on this in the introduction of the book),¹⁷ even if certain authors considered part of the postcolonial canon have at times emphasized the problems and dangers of such a perspective. Achille Mbembe has for example criticized how deviations from the paradigm of African victimization in the Atlantic slave trade are “immediately denounced as ‘non-authentic’ and ‘non-African.’”¹⁸

This chapter hopes to demonstrate the importance of discussing the complicated effects of the slave trade inside the African continent. While there is no doubt about the importance of examining and naming the key actors at the top end of this global trade network, it is also necessary to lay open the ongoing at its bottom end. Recent research in European countries has done much to challenge the alleged innocence of individuals and institutions in the slave trade. But, as this chapter hopes to show, the supposedly innocent village also has its slave trade legacies to deal with. As will be demonstrated at various other points in this book, an understanding of these is crucial for a thorough analysis of Nkhlongue’s history.

Exploring these local entanglements does not mean ignoring their global background. Rather, connected to the fourth objective of this chapter and consistent with the argument of this book as a whole, it will be shown that the arrival of

15 On this point, see: Alice Bellagamba, Sandra E. Greene, and Martin A. Klein, *African Slaves, African Masters: Politics, Memories, Social Life* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2017), 2; Joseph C. Miller, “Breaking the Historiographical Chains: Martin Klein and Slavery,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 34, no. 3 (2000): 513; Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 10.

16 Miller, “Breaking the Historiographical Chains,” 513–514.

17 In Switzerland, for example, most scholars working on slavery and slave trade are almost exclusively concerned with pointing out “Swiss” involvement in the slave trade and colonialism. For examples, see: Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi, and Francesca Falk, eds., *Postkoloniale Schweiz: Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012); Bernhard C. Schär, “Rösti und Revolutionen: Zur postkolonialen Re-Lektüre der Schweizer Geschichte,” *Widerspruch*, no. 72 (2018): 9–19.

18 Achille Mbembe, “The Subject of the World,” in *Facing up to the Past: Perspectives on the Commemoration of Slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe*, ed. Gert Oostindie (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 21.

the globalized slave trade was the first major blow in the biographies of Nkhlongue's future inhabitants that we can reconstruct with a fair degree of certainty. The expansion of the slave trade to the shores of the lake in the 19th century would define the everyday realities of the region's inhabitants in profound ways and for decades. Regional developments mirror those described by Andrew Hubbell for the Niger Bend, which in his words "had become a vast, roiling theater of conflict and competition, with quarrels, skirmishes and warfare occurring between and within villages."¹⁹ Reading this process from a global perspective will undoubtedly blur the lines between perpetrators and victims. Still, this chapter hopes to show that, from a local perspective, such differences were not only discernible, but also crucial for the making of history. It was these differences that led to the formation of Nkhlongue.

Many questions that will be explored in connection with the topic of slave trade and slavery in Nkhlongue cannot be answered conclusively. While Nkhlongue's origins in the slave trade are well documented, the available sources severely limit the possibilities of reconstructing the lives of slaves in the village. They also do not allow for a thorough analysis of the changing social relations within the village from the time of the slave trade to the present. Nevertheless, the comparatively dense contextual knowledge, owing to the micro-perspective of this study, will doubtlessly help narrow down possible developments.

In what follows, I will first outline the developments at the macro level that set the stage for Nkhlongue's formation, a formation which will be examined in a second step. In the third and final part, we will look at the slave trade in Nkhlongue and reflect on what it might have meant to be a slave there.

2.2 The Lake Malawi Region in the 19th Century

Today, in Nkhlongue, everybody speaks the same mother tongue: Chinyanja. But when the village was formed in the second half of the 19th century, its population came from two "ethnic groups": the Wayao (Sg. Yao, people who speak Chiyao) and people belonging to the Maravi cluster (people who speak Chinyanja/Chichewa). We have to use the term "ethnic groups" in this regard cautiously, as it might evoke too fixed ideas of something like common identity, loyalty, or even unity.²⁰

¹⁹ Andrew Hubbell, "A View of the Slave Trade from the Margin: Suroudougou in the Late Nineteenth-Century Slave Trade of the Niger Bend," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (2001): 38.

²⁰ Historical inquiries into ethnicity as "identity marker" in the long-term perspective are rare. An exception is Alexander Keese's study on ethnicity in coastal West Africa and various articles in the book *Ethnicity and the Long-Term Perspective* which he edited. See: Keese, *Ethnicity and the Colo-*

In the 19th century, neither the Wayao nor the people from the Maravi cluster disposed of any larger centralized political unit.²¹ Even the political and social alliances of the time were by far not congruent with a common ethnicity.²² Furthermore, people were able to change their identity between Yao and Maravi rather easily.²³ This was, certainly, facilitated by the cultural similarities of the two groups.²⁴

The Wayao are considered the “traditional” inhabitants of the highlands east of the southern part of Lake Malawi. They trace their origin to the mystical mountain of Yao, a treeless mountain covered only by grass, from where they slowly scattered into different sub-groups.²⁵ Up into the 19th century, the area of their dispersal was more or less limited to what is today the Niassa Province of Mozambique. They had, however, a long history of long-distance trade to the Indian Ocean. In the 18th century, the Wayao were recognized by the Portuguese to be the principal traders at both Kilwa and *Ilha de Moçambique*.²⁶

Different regional names such as Anyanja, Mang’anja or Achewa have been used to identify people belonging to the Maravi cluster. In the 19th century, Europeans often referred to them as Anyasa, which is the Chiyao variant of Anyanja and translates as “people of the lake.” Historically, Maravi settlement was concentrated on the areas to the west and south-west of Lake Malawi. In the 19th century, however, many villages on the eastern shores of Lake Malawi were equally populated by people belonging to the Maravi. These called themselves Anyanja. It is uncertain, when these Anyanja reached the region. Huhn thinks an arrival between

nial State; Alexander Keese, ed., *Ethnicity and the Long-Term Perspective: The African Experience* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

21 John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859–1966* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012), 28.

22 See for example: Gerhard Liesegang, “Guerras, terras e tipos de povoações: Sobre uma ‘tradição urbanística’ do norte de Moçambique no século XIX,” *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, no. 1 (1984): 171; McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859–1966*, 19–20.

23 J.B. Webster, “From Yao Hill to Mulanje Mountain: Ivory and Slaves and the Southwestern Expansion of the Yao (CC/H/142/77),” in *History Seminar Papers 1977/78* (Chancellor College, Zomba, 1977), 5; Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 7; Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, 14. A prominent example in this respect is Makanjira, a powerful Yao chief who is said to have been of Anyanja origin. See: J. Clyde Mitchell, “The Yao of Southern Nyasaland,” in *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa*, ed. Elizabeth Colson and Max Gluckman (1951; repr. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 307.

24 On the cultural similarities, see: Brian Morris, *The Power of Animals: An Ethnography* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 6–9.

25 The first attempt to codify this scattering literally was done by Yohanna B. Abdallah, the first Yao priest of the UMCA: Yohanna B. Abdallah, *The Yaos: Chiikala Cha Wayao*, ed. Meredith Sander-son, 2nd ed. (1919; London: Frank Cass, 1973).

26 Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 58–66.

1830 and 1840 is likely.²⁷ But the late Gerhard Liesegang believed that a Maravi presence on the eastern lakeshore can be dated back to the 17th century or even earlier.²⁸

In any case, around 1840, the situation around what was to become Nkhonongue was more or less one whereby the relatively narrow stretch of lowlands was primarily inhabited by Anyanja, and the land east of this stretch, the highlands, by people belonging to the Wayao. From the 1840s onward, this setting—whether stable or not—was disrupted by two almost simultaneous and externally driven processes.²⁹ These were the dramatic expansion of the trade in slaves and ivory to the Indian Ocean and the immigration of Ngoni-speaking people from the south.

The so-called Arab slave trade across the Indian Ocean has a much longer history than the more famous Atlantic slave trade. Up to the end of the 18th century, the annual number of slaves being traded on the East African Coast was, however, relatively small. Furthermore, slaves came from regions relatively close to the coast. The long-distance trade revolved mainly around ivory. This changed from the end of the 18th century onward. The rising demand for slaves on the East African coast was fueled by such factors as the development of the French plantation colonies on the Mascarene Islands, the British attempt to contain the slave trade in West Africa after 1807, and last but not least the growing importance of the plantation economy within East Africa itself.³⁰ Clove production in Zanzibar experienced a considerable boom, attracting ever more Omani investors and prompting the sultan of Oman to move his capital from Muscat to the archipelago.³¹ The growing demand for slaves drove their places of origin further and further inland. Over the course of the 19th century, the importance of slaves from the Lake Malawi re-

27 Arianna Huhn, “Sustenance and Sociability: Foodways in a Mozambican Town” (PhD thesis, Boston, Boston University, 2013), 40.

28 Liesegang shared his version with me in an email sent on September 18, 2015. In his view, lineages tend to be highly “telescoped” in oral traditions. His detailed reflections on telescoping in the oral tradition of the Anyanja of the eastern lakeshore have not been published, but he hinted at them in an online paper available at academia.edu: Gerhard Liesegang, “Sobre telescopiação e detelescopiação: Como a tradição dinástica dos Tembe e Khosa,” September 2014, accessed January 18, 2018, https://www.academia.edu/8441504/Sobre_Telescopia%C3%A7%C3%A3o_e_De-Telescopia%C3%A7%C3%A3o_Como_a_tradi%C3%A7%C3%A3o_din%C3%A2stica_dos_Tembe_e_Khosa. See also: Liesegang, “Guerras, terras e tipos de povoações,” 170.

29 A good overview of these processes is given in: McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859–1966*, 25–31.

30 Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 150–238; Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 16–41; Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices, & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770–1873* (London: James Currey, 1987), 33–76; Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*, 38–46.

31 Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*, 62.

gion rose to such a level that, according to Frederick Cooper, “Wanyasa” (people from Lake Malawi/Nyasa) became a generic term for people of slave origin in Zanzibar.³²

It needs to be emphasized that both slave traders and slaves came from the same region. Around 1860, the Wayao had become among the most important slave traders of the region but at the same time they also made up a significant proportion of the slaves.³³ Warfare seems to have been the most common means to acquire slaves. Different groups were fighting each other in order to sell the captives.³⁴ In this constellation, the victims of yesterday could be the perpetrators of tomorrow.³⁵

The political instability of the region was further exacerbated by the immigration of the Angoni. This patrilineal people had migrated from far away, namely from what is now South Africa as a result of what is commonly referred to as the *Mfecane*, a wave of extraordinary violence in the early 19th century in not yet colonized areas. Its causes were the subject of controversy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, after Julian Cobbing had denounced the previously accepted explanation of purely self-inflicted black-on-black destruction as a fabrication to justify colonization and apartheid. Instead of internal factors, Cobbing highlighted the growing imperialistic pressures, such as the growing demand for slaves in Portuguese-controlled Delagoa Bay and for laborers in the Cape Colony.³⁶ Regardless of the causes, the violence led to a surge of migrations and displacements. Some migrated as far north as Lake Malawi. They became known as the Angoni. After

32 Cooper, 120, 240–241. For the importance of slaves from the Lake Malawi region, see also: Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 239; Abdul Sheriff, “Localisation and Social Composition of the East African Slave Trade, 1858–1873,” *Slavery & Abolition* 9, no. 3 (1988): 141.

33 Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 239–241.

34 Alpers, 230, 240–41. Examples of “intra-ethnic” warfare are given by: Abdallah, *The Yaos*, 40–43; Webster, “From Yao Hill to Mulanje Mountain.”

35 Edward Alpers, for example, has argued that the Wayao were able to transform their situation of being victims of the Makua-Lomwe people to their east into another in which they were invading the Maravis to the west of them. See: Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 251. See also: W.H.J. Rangeley, “The Ayao,” *The Nyasaland Journal* 16, no. 1 (1963): 10; Abdallah, *The Yaos*, 34–36.

36 Julian Cobbing, “The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo,” *The Journal of African History* 29, no. 3 (1988): 487–519; Christopher Saunders, “Conference Report: Mfecane Afterthoughts,” *Social Dynamics* 17, no. 2 (1991): 171–177; Norman Etherington, “A Tempest in a Teapot? Nineteenth-Century Contests for Land in South Africa’s Caledon Valley and the Invention of the Mfecane,” *The Journal of African History* 45, no. 2 (2004): 203–219.

reaching the lake around the 1840s, they quickly emerged as a major player in the struggle for the region's resources.³⁷

The fight for slaves and other resources, probably further worsened by periods of drought, had destructive effects on life in the affected areas. The first Europeans who visited the region in the second half of the 19th century painted a devastating picture of the situation that they encountered. Albrecht Roscher, the first European to make a verifiable journey through this area, reported in a letter home in 1859 that "[t]here is a terrible famine in the country of the Wayao. Here at the lake it's better, but there are still shortages, as whole stretches are ravaged by the slave wars."³⁸

When David Livingstone visited the region six years later, he had to pass through large tracts that were uninhabited, but still bore "all the marks of having once supported a prodigious iron-smelting and grain-growing population."³⁹ In his journal, Livingstone related the following reasons for this desertion:

Some say slave wars, and assert that the Makua from the vicinity of Mozambique played an important part in them; others say famine; others that the people have moved to and beyond Nyassa.⁴⁰

Certainly, we must be careful not to accept these observations too uncritically, since the picture that was painted resonated with the European propaganda for the need of a civilizing mission. Nevertheless, the accounts of European travelers are backed by oral traditions of the migratory movements that began as a result of the crisis. The most massive of these movements was that of a large number of Wayao who migrated to what is now southern Malawi.⁴¹

While many people were enslaved or forced to migrate as a consequence of these developments, others came to considerable power. Previous scholars have

37 Patrick M. Redmond, "A Political History of the Songea Ngoni from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Rise of the Tanganyika African National Union" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1972), accessed July 12, 2019, <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/29676/1/10752648.pdf>.

38 "Nachrichten von Dr. Roscher in Inner-Afrika," *Mittheilungen aus Justus Perthes' Geographischer Anstalt über wichtige neue Erforschungen auf dem Gesamtgebiete der Geographie* 6 (1860): 281.

39 David Livingstone, *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa*, ed. Horace Waller (New York, 1875), 76. See also: Livingstone, 72, 83.

40 It is "Makoa" in the original. See: Livingstone, *Last Journals*, 83.

41 Edward A. Alpers, "The Yao in Malawi: The Importance of Local Research," in *The Early History of Malawi*, ed. Bridglal Pachai (London: Longman, 1972), 168–178; Webster, "From Yao Hill to Mulanje Mountain"; Nancy Northrup, "The Migrations of Yao and Kololo into Southern Malawi: Aspects of Migrations in Nineteenth Century Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 19, no. 1 (1986): 59–75.

singled out the Yao chiefdoms of Mataka and Makanjira, and the Swahili-ruled town of Nkhotakota as prime hubs of the slave trade in the region.⁴² Nkhotakota was founded around 1860 by Salim bin Abdullah, who was to become known as the first Jumbe of Nkhotakota. Abdullah had initially come to the region as a mere trader, but he then subjected local Chewa chiefs on the western shore of the lake to his political power and took residence there.⁴³

Interestingly, previous research has largely ignored the question of how these important slave traders interacted with each other. Little is known about the trade routes east of Lake Malawi.⁴⁴ Some maps and descriptions from that time and also some later reconstructions by scholars suggest a certain collaboration between these three important hubs of the slave trade. Slaves have been portrayed as having been transported from Nkhotakota on the western shore of the lake to Lussefa on its eastern shore and from there to Muembe, Mataka's town, somewhat inland and, then, finally to the Indian Ocean. Makanjira's town on the south-eastern shores has equally often been depicted as lying on the supply route for Muembe.⁴⁵

Such accounts ignore the fact that there is ample evidence that the dynasties of Mataka, Makanjira, and Jumbe were in reality mostly bitter rivals. The rivalry

⁴² Alpers, "Trade, State, and Society."

⁴³ George Shepperson, "The Jumbe of Kota Kota and Some Aspects of the History of Islam in British Central Africa," in *Islam in Tropical Africa*, ed. I. M. Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 193–207; Harry W. Langworthy, "Swahili Influence in the Area between Lake Malawi and the Luangwa River," *African Historical Studies* 4, no. 3 (1971): 575–602.

⁴⁴ The UNESCO Research Program "Slave Routes and Oral Tradition in Southeastern Africa" aimed at reconstructing these routes. Its findings have, though, been very limited. See: Zimba, "Slave Trade and Slavery in Southeastern Africa."

⁴⁵ Henry O'Neill, "Document No. 131: Consul O'Neill to the Marquis of Salisbury, Mozambique, 13 December 1879," in *Slave Trade No. 1 (1881): Correspondence with British Representatives and Agents Abroad, and Reports from Naval Officers and the Treasury, Relative to the Slave Trade* (London: Houses of Parliament, 1881), 166; Good, *The Steamer Parish*, 52, 67–69; Medeiros, *As etapas da escravatura no norte de Moçambique*, 42. McCracken just mentions the importance of the Nkhotakota-Lussefa crossing without giving any further details on the geography of that route after Lussefa. See: McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859–1966*, 26–27. For Nkhotakota having been portrayed as the principal assembly point of slaves on the western shore, see as well: Stuart, "Christianity and the Chewa," 23. For Lussefa being depicted as the prime entrepôt of slaves on the eastern shores of the lake, see as well: Edward D. Young, *Nyassa, a Journal of Adventures: Whilst Exploring Lake Nyassa, Central Africa, and Establishing the Settlement of "Livingstonia"* (London: John Murray, 1877), 98; Edward D. Young, "On a Recent Sojourn at Lake Nyassa, Central Africa," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* 21, no. 4 (1877): 229; James Frederick Elton, *Travels and Researches among the Lakes and Mountains of Eastern & Central Africa*, ed. H.B. Cotterill (London: John Murray, 1879), 298–99; James Stewart, "The Second Circumnavigation of Lake Nyassa," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography, New Monthly Series* 1, no. 5 (1879): 292.

was especially pronounced between the Jumbes on the one side, and the Matakas and Makanjiras on the other, and can be traced back to at least the 1860s.

The limited nature of cooperation between these different slave traders becomes visible if we look at the way the first European visitors of the region tried to reach Lussefa from Muembe. For, when those Europeans arrived at Muembe in 1866 and 1875, Mataka both times made his visitors to believe that he was the ruler of Lussefa. However, both times realities proved to be more complex. So, when Livingstone wanted to travel to Lussefa in 1866, Mataka did not let him because the place had just been looted and burned, apparently as a result of conflict with the Jumbes.⁴⁶ When the Anglican missionaries then visited Muembe in 1875, Mataka, while posing as the ruler of Lussefa, was in fact anxious that they not go to the lakeshore, fearing that the missionaries might ally with his rival Makanjira.⁴⁷ At almost the same time, affiliates of the Church of Scotland approached Lussefa on the lake from the south. Like the Anglican missionaries, they too intended to open a mission station in Lussefa. They first stopped at Makanjira's, believing him to be the ruler of the town,⁴⁸ mistakenly as it turned out.⁴⁹ When they finally arrived in Lussefa, they described it as an Arab settlement.⁵⁰

There are many reasons to believe that Lussefa was, in fact, indirectly controlled by the Jumbes of Nkhotakota. The main allies of the Jumbes on the eastern side of the lake were most probably neither Mataka nor Makanjira, but the Wayao of Unango, the group to which Chingomanje, Nkholongue's founder, belonged.

The Wayao of Unango have received considerable scholarly attention, but less for their deeds in the 19th century than for the role they played in post-colonial Mozambique when Unango was President Samora Machel's "city of the future," a city to be built in the middle of nowhere.⁵¹ But although their focus of research was on more recent times, the anthropologist José Raimundo and others also studied the early history of the area through oral traditions. What is interesting for this chapter is that they came to the conclusion that the Wayao of Unango did not live

⁴⁶ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, 79. Livingstone's comments on the question of the dispute over Lussefa are rather obscure in his published diary, they are however much clearer in his unpublished field diary, but still remain somewhat enigmatic. See: Livingstone, 72, 85; David Livingstone, "Field Diary IV, 1 July – 5 September 1866," Livingstone Online, 31–32, 68–69, 71–72, accessed October 29, 2021, http://livingstoneonline.org/in-his-own-words/catalogue?query=liv_000004&view_pid=liv%3A000004. See also: Stuart, "Os Nyanja, o U.M.C.A. e a Companhia do Niassa, 1880–1930," 14.

⁴⁷ Edward Steere, *A Walk to the Nyassa Country* (Zanzibar: UMCA, 1876), 26. See also: Julius Richter, *Evangelische Mission im Nyassa-Lande* (Berlin: Evangel. Missionsgesellschaft, 1892), 149.

⁴⁸ Young, *Nyassa, a Journal of Adventures*, 93.

⁴⁹ Young, 96.

⁵⁰ Young, 98.

⁵¹ Tomás Vieira Mário, "Unango: Nasce uma cidade," *Tempo*, no. 506 (June 22, 1980): 7.

in Unango prior to 1870.⁵² Rather, they had lived near Mbemba mountain. Raimundo was able to identify three different motives for the migration from Mbemba to Unango around 1870: 1) attacks by the Angoni, 2) warfare between different Wayao groups, and 3) lack of water around Mbemba.⁵³ The migration and the motives behind it are also corroborated by the interviews conducted by the research group of the AHM in the early 1980s.⁵⁴

Something that has been neglected in the literature on Unango and the history of the regional slave trade is the role the Wayao of Unango played in the trade. Their alliance with the Jumbes is well documented for the 1880s and 1890s when Unango's caravans were said to be "among the very largest and most important of those that pass from the lake districts to the coast."⁵⁵ We can assume that the relationship between the Jumbe and the Wayao of Unango went back to at least 1859. This is suggested by the evidence that can be gathered about the journey of Albrecht Roscher. Roscher was the first European to make a documented crossing of the region. He reached the lake at Lussefa on November 19, 1859, only two months after Livingstone had arrived at the lake's south end.⁵⁶ He then stayed in Lussefa for about four months, after which he was killed in uncertain circumstances on his return to the Indian Ocean. His journals and notes have all been lost. We only have some of his letters at our disposal and the record of the testi-

52 José A. Raimundo, "La place et le rôle des villageois dans le processus de mise en oeuvre de la politique agraire au Mozambique: le cas des communautés Ajaua de la Province de Nyassa (1975 à 2005)" (PhD thesis, Vincennes, Université de Paris VIII, 2008), 58. Rosemary Galli, who conducted research in Unango on Mozambique's post-colonial land policies, dates this migration somewhat earlier, namely between 1850 and 1860, but without giving any explanation for her conclusion: Rosemary E. Galli, *Peoples' Spaces and State Spaces: Land and Governance in Mozambique* (Lexington, 2003), 24.

53 Raimundo, "La place et le rôle des villageois," 62–64.

54 AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 12: N.º 139–142, Entrevista com um grupo de velhos em Lum-biza (Unango, Niassa), interview by Gerhard Liesegang, Teresa Oliveira, and Mueojuane Mainga Vicente, July 17, 1981, 1, 3; AHM, Secção Oral, Transcrito NI 13: N.º 142–143, Entrevista com o ex-régulo Nampanda em Mapudje (Unango, Niassa), July 17, 1981, 8.

55 The quotation is from: Chauncy Maples, "Unangu," *The Nyassa News (TNN)*, no. 2 (November 1893): 49. See as well: William Percival Johnson, "Inclosure 2 in No. 2: Mr. Johnson to Commissioner Johnston," in *Africa. No. 5 (1893). Papers Relative to the Suppression of Slave-Raiding in British Central Africa* (London, 1893), 7–8.

56 Roscher's servant Rashid and one of Roscher's letters gave the name of the place as "Nussewa." It is, however, quite certain that this must be Lussefa, as Roscher stated in a letter that "Nussewa" is just opposite of "Marimba" (Nkhotakota). There is no other place opposite Nkhotakota that bears any similar phonetic resemblance to "Nussewa" except Lussefa. See: "Nachrichten von Dr. Roscher in Inner-Afrika," 281.

mony that his servant Rashid gave before the British Consul Rigby at Zanzibar.⁵⁷ As scant as this evidence seems at first glance, it is still surprising that historians have largely ignored it for other purposes than describing Roscher's own journey, as a close examination of it allows us to draw some interesting conclusions.

First, this evidence confirms that power in Lussefa was already contested in 1860. Roscher's servant Rashid reported of an attack on Lussefa by the Angoni while they stayed there. Second, the evidence from Roscher's journey allows us to substantiate the early importance of the relationship between the Wayao of Unango and the Jumbes of Nkhotakota. According to the sources, Roscher was traveling to the lake in a caravan led by a certain "Salim bin Abdullah." Because of the identical names, and the destination of the caravan on the lake, we can be quite sure that this must have been the first Jumbe of Nkhotakota.⁵⁸ On the way to the lake, the caravan came to the town of a Yao chief whose name is given as "Sultan Kingomanga." This "Kingomanga" took over Roscher from Abdullah and escorted him to Lussefa.

There are at least three indications supporting the assumption that "Kingomanga" was an ancestor of the Chingomanjes' of Nkholongue. First, we have the phonetic similarity of the names. This is how one would pronounce the name in Kiswahili, maybe apart from the ending -a, but the first missionaries of the UMCA also pronounced/wrote Chingomanje similarly, i.e. "Chingomanja" or "Chigomaga."⁵⁹ Second, this would make sense as the alliance between the Jumbes and the Chingomanjes is well-documented for later periods. Third, Rashid reported that "Kingomanga" resided at a place called "Mamemba," an approximate three and a half day journey from the lake. Most interpretations have, so far, identified

57 Extracts from these letters were published in a contemporary German geographical journal: "Nachrichten von Dr. Roscher in Inner-Afrika." For Rashid's testimony, see: C.P. Rigby, "Proceedings No. 43 of 1860," *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society* 16 (1863): xlvii–lii.

58 Rigby, "Proceedings No. 43 of 1860," xlix. This interpretation is also shared by: Eduardo Medeiros, *História de Cabo Delgado e do Niassa (c. 1836–1929)* (Maputo: Central Imprensa, 1997), 114; François Bontinck, "Un explorateur infortuné: Albrecht Roscher (1836–1860)," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 44, no. 3 (1989): 404–405. In some accounts, Abdullah is said to have reached the Nkhotakota area as early as the 1840s. But he is usually said to have established his political power there only between 1861 and 1863. See: MNA, NCK/3/9/5: Kota-Kota (Marimba) District Book, Vol. I, 1st April 1907–30th June 1930, 34–35; Langworthy, "Swahili Influence," 583–584; Shepperson, "The Jumbe of Kota Kota," 196.

59 Swinny, "With Chingomanje," CA 5, no. 56 (1887): 114; William Bellingham, *The Diary of a Working Man (William Bellingham) in Central Africa, December, 1884, to October, 1887*, ed. J. Cooke Yarborough (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1888), 120; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. I–III"; AUMCA, A1(VI)A, f. 950–952: Letter from William Bellingham to W.H. Penney ([Likoma], October 17, 1885), f. 951.

“Mamemba” with Muembe, the capital of the famous already-mentioned Yao chief Mataka.⁶⁰ However, I am convinced that “Mamemba” was a corruption not of Muembe but Mbemba, which fits Rashid’s indication of the time needed to travel there much better than Muembe.⁶¹ This interpretation is also in line with the fact that Raimundo’s interviewees explicitly mentioned the importance of Chingomanje in connection with their stay at Mbemba.⁶² The Mbemba version would also explain why, in the aftermath of Roscher’s assassination, David Livingstone was unsuccessful in trying to locate “Kingomanga” in Muembe.⁶³ It also makes more sense as the ruler of Muembe was undoubtedly Mataka, a name that can be barely confused with “Kingomanga.”⁶⁴

The same connection between “Kingomanga” and Chingomanje was apparently made by George Swinny, the first Anglican missionary to settle in Nkhlongue in 1886. Apparently, he asked about Roscher in Nkhlongue.⁶⁵ According to Swinny’s

60 Livingstone, *Last Journals*, 93; Karl Wand, *Albrecht Roscher: Eine Afrika-Expedition in den Tod* (Darmstadt: Roether, 1986), 121; Liesegang, “A história do Niassa, ca. 1600–1920. Cap. VI.”

61 This is certainly the case if we consider that Roscher was ill and had to be carried often. Livingstone gave the distance from Muembe to Lussefa at five days (without having made the journey himself). The Anglican missionary Glossop made the journey from Nkhlongue to Unango, which is a little bit longer than that from Lussefa to Mbemba, in approximately three and a half days in 1895: Livingstone, *Last Journals*, 72; A. Glossop, “From Likoma to Unangu,” *CA* 13, no. 154 (October 1895): 149–153.

62 Raimundo, “La place et le rôle des villageois,” 59.

63 David Livingstone, “Unyanyembe Journal, 28 January 1866–5 March 1872,” Livingstone Online, 156, accessed January 10, 2018, https://livingstoneonline.org/in-his-own-words/catalogue?view_pid=liv%3A000019. The contents of Livingstone’s journal are completely distorted in the published version, and namely in a way that implies that Livingstone met “Kingomango.” See: Livingstone, *Last Journals*, 93.

64 Even back then, not everyone was convinced with the identification of “Mamemba” as Muembe. See: “Livingstone’s Reisen in Inner-Afrika, 1866–1873,” *Mittheilungen aus Justus Perthes’ Geographischer Anstalt über wichtige neue Erforschungen auf dem Gesamtgebiete der Geographie* 21 (1875): 89.

65 He did not write this explicitly in his diary, but a small note in the margins on the last page of his second diary tells us that Swinny had information from Rigby’s report and that he was most probably looking for clues to solve the geographical puzzle as he had put all the names in scare quotes. The wording of the note indicates that Swinny had not read the original report, but the entry of Livingstone’s diary on the Zambezi expedition in which Livingstone had quoted from Rigby’s report: David Livingstone and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries* (New York: Harper, 1866), 420. Swinny was not the only member of the UMCA looking for Roscher. Bishop Smythies who had visited the lake in July/August 1886 (and thus while Swinny was writing the second volume of his diary) was also looking for his traces: AUMCA, A1(V)A Printed Matters, f. 13; Charles Alan Smythies, *A Journey to Lake Nyassa and Visit to the Magwangwara and the Source of the Rovuma in the Year 1886* (Kiungani, n.d.).

diary, a villager named Saidi told him that Roscher was killed “in a village beyond another Lussefa” by Mataka’s people and that “his friend Chingomanja was with him but escaped to M’ponda’s the other side of the lake where is now living.”⁶⁶ While at first glance this piece of evidence seems to contradict the interpretation that the Chingomanjes of Nkhlongue had any relation to the “Kingomanga” from Rigby’s report, it seems more plausible to read Saidi’s statement as an indication that he knew something about Roscher but preferred to be vague so as to not implicate his chief’s predecessor in the murder of a white man.⁶⁷ It could also be that problems of translation were at play. For, while the statement as it stands suggests that the Chingomanje who went to M’ponda’s and the other side of the lake had nothing to do with Nkhlongue’s Chingomanje, it is noteworthy that the founding myth of Nkhlongue says that the first place Nkhlongue’s Chingomanje went after leaving Mbemba and Unango was M’ponda.⁶⁸ With regard to “the other side of the lake,” it also noteworthy that the first Chingomanje is said to have died on the other side of the lake in Nkhotakhota, from where the remains of his grave were later taken to Nkhlongue.⁶⁹

66 It is “Losewa” and “Mponda” in the original. Underlining as in the original. See: AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, “Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. III,” 31. Saidi named the place of killing as “Chikala kwa Kawinga [as much as Chikala of Kawinga], where salt is manufactured.” The only place I could find with this name is on the western shore of Lake Chilwa, located some 170 miles south of Nkhlongue. While Lake Chilwa was indeed known for its salt extraction, it is unlikely that Roscher had reached Lake Chilwa instead of Lake Malawi, let alone on its western shore. In a letter, Roscher clearly stated that Lussefa was opposite Marimba (Nkhotakota). For the location of Chikala of Kawinga, see: A. Hetherwick, “Notes of a Journey from Domasi Mission Station, Mount Zomba, to Lake Namaramba, August 1887,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 10, no. 1 (January 1888): 25. For salt extraction at Lake Chilwa, see: Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 25–26. For the letter, see: “Nachrichten von Dr. Roscher in Inner-Afrika,” 281.

67 It is also noteworthy in this regard that Saide placed the responsibility for the murder of Roscher on Mataka, who was an enemy of Chingomanje at the time.

68 There are several places around the lake that have been called M’ponda, and my informant was referring to what is nowadays the Mozambican town of Meponda, about 50 miles south Nkhlongue, rather than one of the M’pondas on the other side of the lake. Various distortions may have been at work to explain the difference. However, it seems implausible that there were two different Chingomanjes, staying near two different places both called Lussefa and going to two different places both called M’ponda. See: PA, I003: interview with P0792 (♂, 1917) (Nkhlongue, August 20, 2010), min 00:09:25–00:10:19.

69 PA, I003: interview with P0792 (♂, 1917) (Nkhlongue, August 20, 2010), min 00:43:16–00:46:12; PA, I007: interview with P0298 (♀, ~1922) (Nkhlongue, September 1, 2010), min 00:49:06–00:51:25; PA, I107: interview with P1074 (♀, ~1940) (Malango, April 5, 2016), min 01:36:35–01:37:08; PA, Chadreque Umali, *História de Nyanjas* (Metangula, 1996), 22.

In any case, it seems plausible that the Chingomanjes were already involved in the slave trade and had already known Jumbe before they came to settle at the lake.

2.3 The Formation of Nkholongue

Only those from Nkholongue arrived at the end, as a result of the slave war.⁷⁰

This quote from one of my older interlocutors refers to the fact that when Chingomanje settled at the lake with his followers around 1880, most of the neighboring (Anyanja) chiefdoms were already in existence. But the quote also refers to the fact that it is within the just described context of slave trade, forced migration, and political instability that one needs to understand the formation of Nkholongue. Little of this context was, though, presented to me by the 93-year-old Chief Chingomanje VII when he told me about how his ancestors came to Nkholongue in our first interview in 2010. Rather, he pictured it as a quite peaceful arrival.

“We, ourselves, were moving like grasshoppers. Moving this side, that side. Wayao, Achewa, Anyanja,” he began his story and, then, told me how Chingomanje traveled with a group of five brothers and sisters. While the five women remained nameless,⁷¹ the men had names: the first born was Nampanda, the second born Kalanje, the third born Chingomanje, the fourth born Chiwoza, and the fifth born Chipango. Coming from the mountain of Yao, they came to the mountain of Unango. There, Nampanda, Kalanje, and Chiwoza found a place to live. But Chingomanje did not find a place. He continued his journey to M’ponda at the lake and, from there, he traveled north:

When they left M’ponda, they came to Lussefa. The chief Chitepete welcomed them. When they left Chitepete, they came to Meluluca. There, Chingomanje asked the Chief Nanja: “This side, is there any people or is there no people?” Nanja said that there is only one person there, Chief Maniamba. So, they went to Chief Maniamba. They asked him the same question as they had Nanja. Maniamba answered: “From this side, I am the last one. From here going there, there is nobody. Only, very far, you will find people. But, in all of this part, there is no one.” When Chingomanje surveyed the place, he saw that it was good. So, he wanted to stay here. Before he stayed, he went up to Metangula to Chief Chilombe. When he met Chilombe,

⁷⁰ PA, I128: interview with P1426 (♂, 1929) (Malindi (Mangochi District, Malawi), May 28, 2016), min 01:54:12–01:54:49.

⁷¹ In a later interview, he tried to remember the names of the sisters as well. See: PA, I017: interview with P0792 (♂, 1917), P0793 (♀, 1939) (Nkholongue, October 14, 2011), min 00:09:00–00:15:00.

they made friendship and Chingomanje told him: “I myself, I will stay now between Maniam-ba and you. I am here in the middle.”⁷²

While there is no question that Chingomanje VII accurately depicted the late coming of his ancestors, the details of this settlement and the peacefulness in which it is said to have occurred must be scrutinized very critically. For, there is little doubt that his ancestors’ relationship with their prospective neighbors was not one of equal terms. The Anglican missionary William Percival Johnson, who came to the lake in 1882, described Chingomanje’s arrival as follows in 1900:

This village was occupied by Chingomanje, who came from the hills twenty years ago (shortly before I came up to the Lake), as there was a good shelter for dhows there. Previous to that the whole country had been in [Anyanja] hands.⁷³

The version that the land around Nkholongue had previously been uninhabited was also disputed by some of my interviewees. They claimed that the place had been populated before and stated that the ancestors of the family of Blokhuta and not the Chingomanjes were the first-comers.⁷⁴ One villager⁷⁵ put it like this:

Up to this day, they don’t want to reveal the secret that the first family living here was the Blokhuta family.⁷⁶

The validity of such statements is difficult to verify due to their political nature, as they are directly linked to the question of the legitimate leadership of the village. We will return to this discussion in Chapter 10. In any case, the Anglican missionaries’ accounts show that, in these days, the Wayao of Unango dominated the whole lakeshore area from Lussefa up to Metangula. While Nkholongue was under direct Yao rule, the other villages like Metangula, Meluluca, or Lussefa re-

72 PA, I003: interview with P0792 (♂, 1917) (Nkholongue, August 20, 2010), min 00:03:58–00:18:59.

73 William P. Johnson, “Mohammedanism on Lake Nyasa (1st Part),” *CA* 18, no. 208 (1900): 53.

74 PA, I100: interview with P0025 (♀, 1948) (Nkholongue, February 22, 2016), min 00:37:46–00:37:55; PA, I144: interview with P0411 (♂, 1965) (Nkholongue, June 8, 2016), min 00:29:52–00:31:27; PA, I120: interview with P1102 (♂, 1932) (Malango, April 21, 2016), min 01:47:16–01:47:36.

75 He was a member of the Blokhuta family on his maternal side, but one of the Chingomanje family on his paternal. He passed away in 2012. He lived with his wife virilocally next to his father. In the village survey he identified himself as part of the Blokhuta family. His wife, however, said that he belonged to the Chingomanjes.

76 PA, I033: interview with P0643 (♂, 1981) (Nkholongue, June 9, 2012), min 00:44:02–00:44:22.

mained under nominal Nyanja rule, but became dependent on Unango.⁷⁷ In the words of missionary Johnson, Chingomanje was Unango's "outpost" on the lake.⁷⁸

The origins of this dependency are not entirely clear. If one follows my theory about Roscher, it can be asserted that the dealings of the Wayao of Unango in Lussefa went back to at least 1859. It seems possible that Chingomanje settled at the lake in order to secure the trade route to Nkhotakota. This is at least suggested by the information that Chief Nampanda gave me when I interviewed him in 2011. He stated that Chingomanje was sent to the lake to gain better control of the area as it had become insecure as a consequence of the wars with the Angoni.⁷⁹ In Meluluca, however, people told me that it was their ancestors that went to Unango to ask the Wayao for help in their fight against the Angoni and Yao chiefs from the southern end of the lake.⁸⁰

We can assume that Nkhlongue was not the first base of the Chingomanjes on the lake after they left Unango. First, this is, of course, suggested by the above-quoted account of Chingomanje VII who presented his ancestor's journey as one from the south to Nkhlongue. Second, when the British engineer James Stewart visited Lussefa on the steamer of the Free Church of Scotland in 1878, he observed that the place's chief "was called Kitepete, or sometimes, indifferently, Kungumanje."⁸¹ Now, "Kitepete" or "Chitepete" is the name of Lussefa's current dynasty of chiefs. "Kungumanje" points to the possibility that the Chingomanjes might have then been present in Lussefa. Third, one of my interviewees told me that his ancestors did not cross the lake from Nkhotakota to Nkhlongue directly, but first were brought by Jumbe to Lussefa and only migrated to Nkhlongue from there.⁸²

77 "Notes," *TNN*, no. 4 (May 1894): 138; William Percival Johnson, *My African Reminiscences 1875–1895* (Westminster: UMCA, 1924), 183; Johnson, "Inclosure 2 in No. 2: Mr. Johnson to Commissioner Johnston," 8. The missionaries frequently called Meluluca "Kalanje's town" on the lake. See: AUMCA, E2, f. 277–278: Letter from J. A. Williams to Mr. Travers (Unangu, April 13, 1894); Glossop, "From Likoma to Unangu," *CA* 13, no. 154 (October 1895): 149; "Postbag: Opening of the Church at Unangu," *CA* 12, no. 137 (1894): 75. See also: William Percival Johnson, "News from the Stations: III. The Chauncy Maples," *Nyasaland Diocesan Chronicle (NDC)*, no. 55 (April 1917): 16.

78 Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 145.

79 PA, I019: interview with *Chief Nampanda* (Unango, October 15, 2011), min 00:10:41–00:13:43. For a very similar statement, see: PA, I087: interview with *P1452* (♂, 1927) (Lichinga, September 10, 2013), min 00:00:00–00:04:02.

80 PA, I123: interview with *P1460* (♀), *P1461* (♂, ~1935), *P1462* (♂, ~1935) (Meluluca, April 25, 2016).

81 Stewart, "Second Circumnavigation," 292. Stewart's companion Frederick Elton only mentioned "Kitepete": Elton, *Travels and Researches*, 299.

82 PA, I008: interview with *P0299* (♂, 1938) (Nkhlongue, September 1, 2010), min 0:02:29–00:04:11. Similarly, another interviewee stated that his ancestors had first lived in Meluluca but came here because of problems with lions. However, this one explicitly denied that his ancestors had been

And, fourth, we can observe that the timing of Chingomanje's arrival in Nkhologue correlates with the decline of Lussefa's importance as the major *entrepôt* opposite Nkhotakota. While up to 1880s, Lussefa was always referred to as the central crossing point on the east side of the lake, later accounts highlight the role of Nkhologue and Meluluca.⁸³

Presumably, this move northward was not voluntary, but was caused by the growing pressure by Makanjira from the south.⁸⁴ Makanjira had settled at the south-eastern end of Lake Malawi in the early 1870s.⁸⁵ His rivalry with Jumbe and Chingomanje is well documented and can be dated back to his arrival at the lake or even earlier.⁸⁶ The conflicts with Makanjira seem to have made Lussefa a rather unsafe landing-place for dhows coming from Nkhotakota. At any rate, the trade between Nkhotakota and Lussefa seems to have suffered in those years. The Scottish missionary Robert Laws, who visited both Lussefa and Nkhotakota twice within three years, wrote after his second visit that "[n]othing struck me more forcibly, both at Nkhotakota and Lussefa, than the blight that had apparently fallen on both places since our former visit in 1875."⁸⁷ His fellow missionary James Stewart similarly reported after the 1878 visit that Lussefa's "glories and prosperity seem to belong to the past; desolation, dirt, and decay now hold possession of the place."⁸⁸

While the theory that Jumbe and Chingomanje were driven out of Lussefa by Makanjira and other Yao chiefs cannot be supported by any explicit evidence, it also makes much sense if we look at what happened when Chingomanje was al-

slaves. See: PA, I096: interview with P1216 (♂, 1957) (Malango, February 1, 2016), min 01:28:52–01:33:10.

⁸³ "Notes," *TNN*, no. 2 (November 1893): 62; AUMCA, A1(VI)A, f. 946–949: Letter from William Bellingham to W.H. Penney (Likoma), October 1, 1885; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. I," 110, 121; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. II," 53; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. III," 34, 37. ⁸⁴ For this pressure, see as well: Harry W. Langworthy, "Central Malawi in the 19th Century," in *From Nyasaland to Malawi: Studies in Colonial History*, ed. Roderick J. Macdonald (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), 15–17.

⁸⁵ Young, *Nyassa, a Journal of Adventures*, 73. See also: Alpers, "Trade, State, and Society," 414.

⁸⁶ See for example: Langworthy, "Swahili Influence," 590; Henry O'Neill, "Paper No. 38: Consul O'Neill to Earl Granville, Mozambique, 30 April 1883," in *Slave Trade No. 1 (1884). Correspondence with British Representatives and Agents Abroad, and Reports from Naval Officers and the Treasury, Relative to the Slave Trade: 1883–1884* (London: Houses of Parliament, 1884), 1; Langworthy, "Central Malawi in the 19th Century," 16–17.

⁸⁷ It is "Kotakota" and "Losewa" in the original. See: Robert Laws, "Voyage on Lake N'yassa," *The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, no. 189 (April 1, 1878): 84.

⁸⁸ Stewart, "Second Circumnavigation," 292. However, his companion Frederick Elton, who visited the village for the first time, still called it "a respectable one." See: Elton, *Travels and Researches*, 299. For the situation in 1875, see as well: Young, *Nyassa, a Journal of Adventures*, 98.

ready settled at Nkholongue in the 1880s. Nkholongue, being a perennial river north of Lussefa, was more secure but not secure enough: in June 1886, Nkholongue was destroyed, according to missionary George Swinny by Makanjira's people.⁸⁹ Then, in July 1887, the village was again burnt down, this time apparently by an alliance of Mkalawiri⁹⁰ and Mataka.⁹¹ The Anglican missionary Charles Smythies, who had witnessed the village lying in ruins, noted in his diary that "[t]here are often quarrels between Jumbe and the great chiefs on this side, & then they seem to visit it on his weaker friend Chingomanje, whom they are all to attack."⁹²

Obviously, Nkholongue's formation did not fall into a period in which the domination of the Wayao of Unango over the lakeshore was uncontested, but rather into a period when this "domination"—if it had ever existed in some pure form—was increasingly put into question.

2.4 The Slave Trade and Slavery in Nkholongue

While there is some uncertainty about the exact dealings of the Wayao of Unango with Jumbe and the slave trade in the years prior to the 1880s, the situation becomes much clearer after the settlement of the Chingomanjes in Nkholongue and the almost simultaneous arrival of the missionaries of the UMCA in the region. Both oral testimony and the missionaries' accounts clearly show that Kalanje, the main chief of Unango, was Chingomanje's senior and Jumbe their common ally.⁹³

⁸⁹ It is "Makanjila" and "Losewa" in the original. See: AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. I," 111.

⁹⁰ This Yao chief resided south of Lussefa.

⁹¹ AUMCA, A1(V)B, f. 368–404: Charles Alan Smythies, [Diary/Report of Bishop Smythies' Third Visit to Nyasa (July to Sept.)] (Likoma, 1887); AUMCA, A1(V)A Printed Matters, f. 19: Charles Alan Smythies, *A Journey from Zanzibar to Lake Nyassa and Back, in the Year 1887* (Westminster: UMCA, n.d.). See as well: AUMCA, A1(V)A Printed Matters, f. 19: Charles Alan Smythies, *A Journey from Zanzibar to Lake Nyassa and Back, in the Year 1887* (Westminster: UMCA, n.d.), 13.

⁹² AUMCA, A1(V)B, f. 368–404: Charles Alan Smythies, [Diary/Report of Bishop Smythies' Third Visit to Nyasa (July to Sept.)] (Likoma, 1887), f. 398A.

⁹³ For Kalanje being Chingomanje's superior, see: PA, I154: interview with P0367 (♂, 1936), P0373 (♀, 1940) (Nkholongue, June 18, 2016), min 01:08:22–01:10:08; PA, I113: interview with P0367 (♂, 1936) (Nkholongue, April 13, 2016), 01:49:50–01:49:59; Johnson, "Inclosure 2 in No. 2: Mr. Johnson to Commissioner Johnston," 7–8. For Kalanje being Jumbe's ally, see: J.E. Hine, *Days Gone by: Being Some Account of Past Years Chiefly in Central Africa* (London: John Murray, 1924), 137; "Notes," *TNN*, no. 2 (November 1893): 62. For Chingomanje being Jumbe's ally, see: AUMCA, A1(V)B, f. 368–404: Charles Alan Smythies, [Diary/Report of Bishop Smythies' Third Visit to Nyasa (July to Sept.)] (Likoma, 1887); AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887),

These sources also substantiate Kalanje's and Chingomanje's involvement in the slave trade. The situation in Nkholongue was such that "slave caravans continually passed and repassed."⁹⁴ Swinny described the way from Nkholongue to Unango to be "well trodden by slave caravans and Yao traders bound for the coast."⁹⁵ The missionaries frequently reported of dhows plying between Nkhotakota and Nkholongue.⁹⁶ Some of them belonged to Jumbe, but Chingomanje and Kalanje also had their own boats.⁹⁷ One villager described the use of Chingomanje's dhow as follows:

With this boat, they traveled from here to Nkhotakhota, caught people there, and took them here. Then, they went again to the other side, grabbed people there and took them here. This is the way, how [Chingomanje] was moving with this boat.⁹⁸

Chingomanje VII put it like this in one of our later interviews:

Vol. II," 55; PA, I008: interview with P0299 (♂, 1938) (Nkholongue, September 1, 2010), min 00:03:35–00:04:11; PA, I014: interview with P0147 (♀, ~1928), P0129 (♀, 1930) (Nkholongue, September 8, 2010), min 00:27:00–00:27:24; AUMCA, A1(V)A Printed Matters, f. 19: Charles Alan Smythies, *A Journey from Zanzibar to Lake Nyassa and Back, in the Year 1887* (Westminster: UMCA, n.d.), 13. ⁹⁴ Johnson, "Mohammedanism on Lake Nyasa (1st Part)," *CA* 18, no. 208 (1900): 53. For "sightings" of caravans in Nkholongue by missionaries, see: AUMCA, A1(VI)D, f. 44–47: Letter from William P. Johnson to W.H. Penney (February 21, 1888), f. 44; AUMCA, A1(V)B, f. 368–404: Charles Alan Smythies, [Diary/Report of Bishop Smythies' Third Visit to Nyasa (July to Sept.)] (Likoma, 1887), f. 398–399; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. III," 37; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. II," 54. See as well: Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 145.

⁹⁵ AUMCA, A1(VI)A, f. 1270–1293: Letter from George Swinny to W.H. Penney (Isle of Likoma, May 15, 1886), f. 1273. Part of this letter, including the quotation, were later printed in *Central Africa*: "The Charles Janson," *CA* 4, no. 45 (1886): 135. See also: AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. II," 59.

⁹⁶ For evidence, see: AUMCA, A1(VI)A, f. 946–949: Letter from William Bellingham to W.H. Penney ([Likoma], October 1, 1885); AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. I," 110, 121; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. II," 53; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. III," 34, 37.

⁹⁷ PA, I001: interview with P0050 (♂, ~1922) (Nkholongue, August 17, 2010), min 00:25:26–00:26:39; PA, I003: interview with P0792 (♂, 1917) (Nkholongue, August 20, 2010), min 00:15:19–00:16:22; PA, I002: interview with P0128 (♂, 1928) (Nkholongue, August 18, 2010), min 00:58:27–00:59:00; PA, I005: interview with P0641 (♂, 1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2010), min 01:11:29–01:12:03; PA, I012: interview with P0367 (♂, 1936) (Nkholongue, September 3, 2010), min 00:43:13–00:45:38. Smythies noted that "Chingomanje & his people have one or two dhows." See: AUMCA, A1(V)B, f. 368–404: Charles Alan Smythies, [Diary/Report of Bishop Smythies' Third Visit to Nyasa (July to Sept.)] (Likoma, 1887), f. 398A.

⁹⁸ PA, I005: interview with P0641 (♂, 1952) (Nkholongue, August 27, 2010), min 01:12:03–01:12:22.

We, the Chingomanjes, listen, those Chingomanjes, they went to other side of the lake to buy people. With those people, they went to Tanzania to sell them.⁹⁹

The presence of the slave trade in Nkholongue is thus well documented. But we know very little about how it worked in detail. It seems that the local chiefs demanded a toll for passing caravans.¹⁰⁰ But the quotations above clearly suggest that Chingomanje, apart from providing the infrastructure for the trade, was also actively involved in it. He might thereby have participated in Kalanje's caravan, which went to the coast of the Indian Ocean on an annual basis.¹⁰¹ Other caravans were organized by Swahili traders, who were frequently present in Nkholongue.¹⁰²

Nkholongue was not only a reloading point, but also a destination for slaves. The situation in Nkholongue was such that the majority of the village's population had not come with Chingomanje from Unango but was brought here from the other side of the lake. The Anglican missionary William P. Johnson described the social structure of Nkholongue like this:

Chingomanje's village was like most of these Yao places. He himself and his kindred (by the mother) you could count on the fingers of a hand; then he had one or two sons and some trusty overseers [...]; the rest were slaves [...].¹⁰³

Though the exact ratio between slave owners and slaves might be exaggerated in this statement, the tendency is, as will be discussed below, clearly confirmed by other sources and by the data from my interviews and surveys.

What were the reasons for the settlement of these slaves? Various factors may have interacted here, including questions of political power, social status, lineage and gender, and economics. As in other parts of Africa, social and political significance among the Wayao was defined very much by what has been called the

⁹⁹ PA, I017: interview with P0792 (♂, 1917), P0793 (♀, 1939) (Nkholongue, October 14, 2011), min 01:12:47–01:13:01.

¹⁰⁰ "Nyasaland and the Slave Traffic," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* 14, no. 5 (September 1894): 282. Evidence that Kalanje levied taxes on caravans is found in: Arthur Fraser Sim, *The Life and Letters of Arthur Fraser Sim* (Westminster: UMCA, 1897), 116.

¹⁰¹ AUMCA, A1(XI), f. 457–462: Letter from Bishop Hine to Travers (Unangu, May 22, 1901), f. 461.

¹⁰² Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 145, 183; "Notes," *TNN*, no. 8 (May 1895): 272; AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. II," 54. See as well: "Nyasaland and the Slave Traffic," 282.

¹⁰³ It is "Chingomanji" in the original. See: Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 145.

“wealth-in-people paradigm,”¹⁰⁴ regionally epitomized by the negative maxim that “a chief without people is nothing.”¹⁰⁵ However, the purchase of slaves did not just allow a chief to enlarge his following but also rearranged his position within the kinship unit. The Wayao and Maravi are “traditionally” matrilineal people (this ascription will be analyzed critically in Chapter 11). Under normal circumstances, a chief’s children would not belong to his own lineage, but to that of his wife. By marrying a slave wife, a chief could avoid this, and thus increase the reproductive capacity of his kinship group considerably as the slave wife’s children would belong to his matriliney.¹⁰⁶ Kalanje was said to have 20 slave wives according to one source and 42 according to another.¹⁰⁷ For Nkhlongue, such (possibly inflated) numbers are not available, but the occurrence of slave marriages was reported in the oral histories collected by the late Chadreque Umali, a local historian from the lakeshore area. In his history of the chiefdoms of the region, he wrote about Nkhlongue:

Chingomanje made boats in which he took ebony to Marimba in order to exchange it for women. While the pretty women resulting from this trade stayed with him, he offered the rest to his relatives and his slaves.¹⁰⁸

The possible effects of the slave trade on matrilineal principles have repeatedly been highlighted. In line with this, Jonna Katto has recently argued that the slave trade went hand in hand with a masculinization of (political) authority in Niassa.¹⁰⁹ As I have pointed out in the introduction of this book, the problem is

104 For a discussion of the concept, see: Jane I. Guyer, “Wealth in People and Self-Realization in Equatorial Africa,” *Man (New Series)* 28, no. 2 (1993): 243–65; Jane I. Guyer and Samuel M. Eno Belinga, “Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 91–120.

105 Mitchell, *The Yao Village*, 37. This maxim is valid for most groups living around the lake. For similar descriptions in the case of the Achewa and the Lakeside Tonga, see: Fabiano Kwaule, “Kanyenda, the Mwale Expansion into Nkhota-Kota and the Swahili Challenge, 1750–1890,” in *History Seminar Papers 1978/79* (Chancellor College, Zomba, 1979), 20. This maxim also surfaced in my interviews. See: PA, I001: interview with P0050 (♂, ~1922) (Nkhlongue, August 17, 2010), min 00:06:00–00:07:18; PA, I128: interview with P1426 (♂, 1929) (Malindi (Mangochi District, Malawi), May 28, 2016), min 00:46:53–00:47:59. See as well: MLM, 018: interview with L. M., transcript Chinyanja (Malango, June 27, 2007).

106 Alpers, “Trade, State, and Society,” 412.

107 Yohanna B. Abdallah, “A Letter From Unangu,” *African Tidings*, no. 68 (June 1895): 58; Robert Howard, “The Hearer’s Service at Nyasa,” *CA* 19, no. 221 (May 1901): 79.

108 PA, Chadreque Umali, *História de Nyanjas* (Metangula, 1996), 22.

109 Jonna Katto, “‘The Rainha Is the Boss!’: On Masculinities, Time and Precolonial Women of Authority in Northern Mozambique,” *Gender & History*, January 7, 2022, 12.

that we largely lack the sources to answer this question conclusively. Almost all we have are either observations made by outside male observers from patriarchal societies at a time when the slave trade had been raging for decades, or retrospective memories influenced by the norms of the time of their recollection. Above, I highlighted the namelessness of Chingomanje's sisters in this regard. Still, there is some evidence that European visitors misunderstood female (political) authority if they found it and thus contributed from the outset to who was eligible to be considered a political authority and who not. For example, when the Anglican bishop Smythies visited Unango in 1887, Chief Kalanje, his "ideal" conversation partner, was absent. Instead, it was a woman who welcomed the bishop in Kalanje's place. Smythies perceived this woman, who remained nameless in his account, to be such "a very superior woman for this country," and to be able to speak so "well" that he felt the need to "congratulate" her on being able to do so.¹¹⁰

We can be quite certain that this woman Smythies met was part of Unango's chiefly matrilineage. Smythies' statement can be read as clear evidence of the authority female members of this lineage enjoyed at the time. However, since the encounter took place in the midst of the slave trade, we can also note that the trade may have weakened this authority at this point, but evidently had not yet broken it. It can also be asserted that the slave trade obviously did not break the matrilineal system of succession, even if this does not mean that some slave traders did not attempt to do so.¹¹¹

In any case, the acquisition of slaves might have allowed Chingomanje not only to rearrange his position in the matriliney but also to increase his following to secure his position against his external rivals such as Makanjira and Mataka. Moreover, we can assume that the slaves also had economic functions to fulfill, namely to help provide provisions and infrastructure for the slave trade.¹¹² The importance of mobilizing labor in this regard is suggested by the fact that the supply of labor in Nkhlongue was obviously not as abundant and cheap as one might be-

110 AUMCA, A1(V)A Printed Matters, f. 19: Charles Alan Smythies, *A Journey from Zanzibar to Lake Nyassa and Back, in the Year 1887* (Westminster: UMCA, n.d.), 12. For the description of the same meeting in his diary/report of the journey, see: AUMCA, A1(V)B, f. 368–404: Charles Alan Smythies, [Diary/Report of Bishop Smythies' Third Visit to Nyasa (July to Sept.)] (Likoma, 1887), f. 397.

111 It must be noted in this regard that powerful women were obviously also involved in the slave trade and tried to use this to their benefit. See: Benigna Zimba, "Memories of Slave Trade and Slavery Achivanjila I and the Making of the Niassa Slave Routes," in *Slave Routes and Oral Tradition in Southeastern Africa*, ed. Benigna Zimba, Edward Alpers, and Allen Isaacman (Maputo, 2005).

112 It should also be noted in this context that Abdallah did not describe the enlargement of the lineage as a motive for the purchase of slaves in his history of the Wayao. Rather, he wrote that the Wayao took some of the slaves "to the coast to buy trade-goods with them, others they kept at home to hoe the gardens, build houses, and do other village work." See: Abdallah, *The Yaos*, 31.

lieve. Thus, while the missionaries of UMCA were easily able to get the permission to settle in Nkhlongue for free, they had much more trouble in getting workers, at least at the price the missionaries were willing to pay for them.¹¹³

Caravans heavily depended on the ability to refit with sufficient food provisions. This might even have constituted a central reason that important slave routes crossed the lake at all (apart from the fact that the journey across the lake marked a clear watershed between the slave's point of origin and their new destiny). The availability of food was at that time much better at the lake than elsewhere, as Albrecht Roscher had also noted in the letter quoted earlier (see p. 63). The Zanzibar-based missionary Horace Waller explained the importance of the lake in this regard by saying, "if [the slave dealers] do not refit at Lake Nyassa, where food is always to be procured, the slaves will starve on their way to the coast."¹¹⁴ In his reminiscences, W.P. Johnson explicitly mentioned that the organization of caravans in Nkhlongue included not only the collection of slaves but also the procurement of provisions for the journey.¹¹⁵ With year-round water and abundant fishing grounds, the lake offered natural advantages in this regard, but still required the necessary human labor to make effective use of them.

Given these different functions for slaves, we can assume that the status of different slaves in the village also varied significantly. Furthermore, people's unfree status was not necessarily definite and not necessarily hereditary. Rather, there seem to have existed significant possibilities for social mobility. Writing about the region in general, W.P. Johnson stated that slave men who married women of the chief's family were already regarded as "free people," and so were children born to men of the chief's kindred by slave wives.¹¹⁶

However, the prospects for such mobility may often not have been so certain. The evidence suggests that the boundaries between slaves in transit and slaves settled permanently were fairly fluid. Thus, in an encounter that George Swinny had in a neighboring village of Nkhlongue in 1886, a slave begged Swinny to convey

113 AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, "Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. II," 54. My own observations in this regard confirm those of Michelle Liebst, who has highlighted the importance that the procuring of labor had in the everyday life of missionaries of the UMCA at Zanzibar. See: Michelle Liebst, "African Workers and the Universities' Mission to Central Africa in Zanzibar, 1864–1900," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, no. 3 (2014): 366–381.

114 Royal Commission on Fugitive Slaves, *Report of the Commissioners, Minutes of the Evidence, and Appendix, with General Index of Minutes of Evidence and Appendix: Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty* (London, 1876), 39.

115 Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 145.

116 William Percival Johnson, *Nyasa. The Great Water* (1922; repr., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 22. See also: "Marriages," *Likoma Diocesan Quarterly Paper (LDQP)*, no. 12 (July 1906): 306.

him to Nkhotakota. Swinny noted in his diary that he “could only tell him to be a good servant to his master then he w[ould] not be so likely to be sold.”¹¹⁷ The missionary Duff MacDonald similarly pointed to this possibility of sale at any time when he described the use of slaves in the lake region:

The male slaves [the chief or headman] employs in farming, building, making baskets, sewing garments, and such masculine pursuits. He keeps all these persons strictly at their duties, and at the same time welcomes an opportunity of selling them at a profit. The gain thus realised he lays out in purchasing more people.¹¹⁸

Most caravans did not resemble a sealed truckload that was packed at the point of departure and only opened at the destination. Rather, their composition changed on the way. W.P. Johnson stated that slaves who were transported across the lake “might be sold anywhere on the long way down to the coast, where there was a demand for them and means to buy them.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, published freed-slave accounts suggest that many slaves “passed through a number of hands, several changing owners three or four times before reaching the coast.”¹²⁰

As for their daily duties, many slaves seem to have had roles best described by the term “serfs.” For, while we have no reliable information in this respect for the specific situation in Nkholongue, in Nkhotakota, “slaves” were said to be able to cultivate their own fields, but had to pay 25 percent of their harvest to their owner.¹²¹ Similarly, for the lake area in general, Johnson stated that slaves were expected to grow their own food, but that their masters were able to claim as much of their harvest as they wanted to.¹²² He further noted that they could also be obliged to work in their master’s field.¹²³

Against the image of the “slavery-to-kinship continuum,” social stratification in Nkholongue seems to have been significant in general. While some slaves might have been integrated into the free kinship units rather quickly, others were undoubtedly a different “class” of people. Thus, Johnson once heard Chingomanje bargain with a Swahili trader about “hides with two legs (i.e. slaves), and

117 AUMCA, TC/G: George H. Swinny, “Nyasaland Diaries (1884–1887), Vol. II,” 73; AUMCA, A1(VI)A, f. 1270–1293: Letter from George Swinny to W.H. Penney (Isle of Likoma, May 15, 1886), f. 1281.

118 Duff MacDonald, *Africana; or the Heart of Heathen Africa: Vol. I—Native Customs and Beliefs* (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1882), 147.

119 Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 90.

120 Alpers, *Ivory & Slaves*, 241.

121 Sim, Arthur Fraser, “A Letter from Kota-Kota,” CA 13 (1895): 35. See as well: Sim, *Life and Letters*, 136.

122 Johnson, *The Great Water*, 54.

123 Johnson, 36.

hides with four legs (i.e. goats).”¹²⁴ Nkhlongue’s social stratification is also evident from the way Johnson described the procedure of his regular visits to Nkhlongue in 1888:

Chingomanje’s is the next village after Messumba. There we have now preaching at [Chingomanje’s] verandah or wherever the King’s court follows him. The audience is not numerous things [sic]. They are on a small scale except the heap of stones where I have another preaching for the Anyanja part of the village.¹²⁵

While Johnson portrayed the social structure of Nkhlongue largely in binary terms, we can assume that this was in reality somewhat more complex. As for the region in general, Johnson stated that each village was constituted by people from “four classes.” The first class consisted of the chief’s kindred, the second were other “weaker free people” who had taken shelter with him, the third were temporary inhabitants like traders, and the fourth slaves.¹²⁶ We can assume that “free people” beyond the chiefly lineage were present in Nkhlongue. Thus, some of my interviewees emphasized that their ancestors had not been slaves even though they came from Nkhotakota. As people were generally reluctant to tell me about the slave status of their ancestors, we have to be very cautious with such claims.¹²⁷ But, some of the indications from the interviews in this regard fit surprisingly well with documentary evidence. One interviewee, for example, portrayed his ancestor as an independent skipper of a dhow. According to his statement, Nkhlongue belonged to his ancestor and Chingomanje was just taking care of the place for him.¹²⁸ While there is little reason to doubt Chingomanje’s political authority over Nkhlongue, the independence of the captains of the dhows is clearly supported by other evidence. Thus, Johnson recounted in his memoirs that the skipper of one of the dhows coming to Nkhlongue had once gone “on strike with his crew, because the Chief at Unango had paid them too little money!”¹²⁹

124 William P. Johnson, “More about the Yaos,” *TNN*, no. 3 (February 1894): 78. For other description of the same scene, see: Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 145; Johnson, “Mohammedanism on Lake Nyasa (1st Part),” *CA* 18, no. 208 (1900), 54.

125 It is “Sumba” and “Nyasa” (instead of “Anyanja”) in the original. See: AUMCA, A1(VI)B, f. 233–240: Letter from William P. Johnson to W.H. Penney (1888), f. 233–234.

126 Johnson, *The Great Water*, 21–22.

127 See for example: PA, I093: interview with P0050 (♂, ~1922) (Nkhlongue, January 19, 2016), min 00:08:00–00:09:19.

128 PA, I128: interview with P1426 (♂, 1929) (Malindi (Mangochi District, Malawi), May 28, 2016), min 00:02:11–00:05:24, 00:27:00–00:31:32, 01:42:07–01:50:59.

129 It is “Unangu” in the original. See: Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 141.

As for the proportions of the four classes, Johnson stated that they varied from village to village, but that in the villages of the Wayao the non-slaves were usually very few. Johnson noted that the social structure of the Yao villages resembled that of Nkhotakota in this regard.¹³⁰ For there, the missionary Arthur Fraser Sim estimated that about three quarters of the population were serfs.¹³¹ This also seems to be a figure that approximately matches the genealogical data from the village surveys.¹³²

In light of this ratio, we have to ask how the slaves were made to stay with their owners? Certainly, we must consider direct force. Nkholongue's elite possessed guns, and the village was surrounded by a stockade. We can suspect that the stockade around Nkholongue was not only built to keep possible enemies out, but also to keep possible fugitives in. Johnson explicitly mentioned that Chingomanje had "trustworthy overseers."¹³³ But there were yet other factors that prevented slaves from running away. Slaves often had nowhere to go. Many lost their "free home" when they were enslaved or never had one as they were already born as slaves. Furthermore, being transported across the lake had more or less cut the cord to their former homes.

In addition, it is important in this regard to recall that the boundaries between slaves in transit and permanently settled slaves seem to have been fluid. Staying with a reasonably good master might have been the best option they had, as this offered them at least some sort of protection and prevented them from the alternative of being sold to the coast. There is no doubt that, as in other regions of Africa, the threat of sale "had operated as an important mechanism of social control over slaves."¹³⁴ As will be argued in Chapter 4, the end of this threat greatly loosened the control of masters over their slaves.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the advance of the slave trade led to the formation of Nkholongue. I have thereby attempted to draw attention to understudied processes

¹³⁰ Johnson, *The Great Water*, 21–22.

¹³¹ Sim, Arthur Fraser, "A Letter from Kota-Kota," *CA* 13 (1895): 35.

¹³² For an approximate idea, see Table 15 on p. 410.

¹³³ Johnson, *African Reminiscences*, 145.

¹³⁴ Robin Law refers here to the threat of "overseas sales." However, he also suggests that this can be said for sales in general. See: Robin Law, ed., *From Slave Trade to "Legitimate" Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 16.

that were triggered by this global trade at the micro-level inside the African continent. The first inhabitants of what was to become the village of Nkhlongue certainly did not know anything about India's taste for clove or about sugar production in Brazil, but it was essentially such realities at such distant places that across a good many chain links set the stage for the formation of their little village. And what happened in this little village also contributed—even though in this case it is barely measurable—to the realities far away.

The chapter has further contributed to deepening our knowledge of the slave trade in the Lake Malawi region by shedding light on the cooperation and rivalries of different rulers involved in the slave trade and in particular by highlighting the previously ignored role of the Wayao of Unango as allies of Nkhotakota on the eastern side of the lake. Several findings in this chapter also contribute to the history of the slave trade and slavery in Africa as a whole. Let me highlight four of them:

First, this chapter has shown that the purchase of slaves indeed seems to have worked as a means of enlarging one's kinship unit and rearranging one's position in the unit, confirming basic assumptions of the "slavery-to-kinship continuum." However, I have also emphasized the violent nature of the process. In particular, I have stressed that the idea of straightforward integration should beware of the danger of *ex post facto* reconstruction, by underlining that the path of integration was apparently often uncertain in light of the continuing possibility of being sold. The formation of Nkhlongue clearly illustrates that the processes that triggered the demand for slavery inside and outside the continent cannot be neatly separated.

Second, this chapter has also provided evidence to challenge ideas of the absoluteness and unilinearity of kinship integration. As has been stated, the descendants of both slave traders and slaves were generally reluctant to talk about this history in detail. This largely corresponds with the experiences of other scholars in other areas of Africa.¹³⁵ However, like Cooper's informant on the Kenyan coast,¹³⁶ all my interviews informed me openly about their ancestor's origin on the other side of the lake. Following Cooper, the very recollection of these places of origin can be read as an element of the slaves' cultural resistance to being absorbed and assimilated.¹³⁷ In this sense, Orlando Patterson's "social death" was ob-

135 Examples include that of Jaap van Velsen among the Lakeside Tonga and that of Kristin Mann in Lagos. See: Velsen, *The Politics of Kinship*, 256–257; Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 18. See as well: Martin A. Klein, "Studying the History of Those Who Would Rather Forget: Oral History and the Experience of Slavery," *History in Africa* 16 (1989): 209–217.

136 Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*, 240–241.

137 Cooper, "The Problem of Slavery in African Studies," 124–125.

viously never complete in the case of Nkholongue.¹³⁸ This becomes even more evident if one considers the processes of cultural assimilation of Nkholongue's chiefly lineage to the village's majority slave population in the long run (see especially Chapter 3 in this regard).

Third, this chapter has demonstrated that Nkholongue was not only a location of the slave trade, but that the slave trade engraved itself into the very fabric of Nkholongue's "villageness." This points to the general need to reflect more about the short- and long-term effects of the slave trade on such micro-levels of society usually associated with intimacy. As a reloading point in the slave trade, Nkholongue was certainly a particular setting in this regard. However, the usual focus on the slave trade tends to disguise the large number of slaves kept inside the African continent.¹³⁹

Finally, I hope that this chapter has provided a reasonable basis for understanding that many of the more recent twists and turns of Nkholongue's history lose weight when analyzed without considering the implications of the village's emergence as a result of the slave trade. At various points in this book, we will see how incorporating this knowledge can both complicate and enhance our analysis of various processes. In the next chapter, for example, we will discuss the ways in which Islamization may have facilitated the changes in Nkholongue's social structure that were necessitated by the approaching end of the slave trade. In Chapter 4, we will use Nkholongue's origins in the slave trade as a starting point to reflect that colonization may have been perceived differently by different people in the village. While in Chapter 10, we will see that the knowledge of the village's formation not only challenges the idea of "traditional authorities" as a legitimate grassroots institution, but is also still used by villagers to question the legitimacy of Nkholongue's elite.

138 This insight of course also connects to works of various scholars who have shown how cultural resistance survived the passage across the Atlantic. For an overview, see: Lisa A. Lindsay, "Slavery, Absorption, and Gender: Frederick Cooper and the Power of Comparison," *History in Africa* 47 (2020): 65–74.

139 In relation to the Lake Malawi region, the British "lay" ethnologist Hugh Stannus guessed that most slaves were kept in the region and only a minority sold. See: Hugh Stannus, "The Wayao of Nyasaland," in *Varia Africana III*, ed. E. A. Hooton and Natica I. Bates (Cambridge: The African Department of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, 1922), 280.