

2 Entering the Town: Representation and Imagination

What do we already know about Kigoma-Ujiji? Undoubtedly, the answer to this question depends on whom you ask. Some readers probably know details about the town that I have not yet become aware of since I first set foot in Kigoma-Ujiji. Others may have consulted a world map to vaguely situate which part of the planet we are talking about. The huge variety in knowledge and interest has characterized representations of the town ever since it was first mentioned in the 1850s. Sure, there must have been plenty of people in the region who had mentioned Ujiji before this date. But the first mentioning of ‘the town’ of Ujiji – “die Stadt Ujiji”, to be precise – was most probably not earlier, if only because there was not yet a town with a semblance of urbanity at that time. The first mention of the town was flawed. Ujiji, back then, more accurately referred to the land of the Jiji people rather than the town that would indeed develop here in the following decades.

In this chapter, I introduce the often biased knowledge that people from elsewhere entering the town – or in some rare cases, representations by people who have never been there – provided about Kigoma-Ujiji during a period of over a century and a half. I present three sets of outside perceptions and representations of the town: outsider views by visitors since the mid-nineteenth century, representations in popular culture, and finally a reflection on my own position as an outsider – whether I like it or not.

Taken together, these outside representations provide a backdrop of expectations, imaginations, stereotypes, and observations against which a global history of Kigoma-Ujiji can be staged and with which I critically engage in this chapter. This backdrop is often more informative for nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history than for Kigoma-Ujiji. The remaining chapters of this book, then, address what happened ‘on stage’, in the urban space itself.

Yet, the backdrop matters. For one, especially for the nineteenth century, we have no other choice than to rely on these outside accounts as our main sources to reconstruct the history of the place and its people. The next chapter is to a considerable extent based on the same sources as the nineteenth-century section of this chapter. However, in the next chapter these sources are used to reconstruct the historical process of urbanization, whereas, in this chapter, I primarily reconstruct how Kigoma-Ujiji has been perceived and represented by outsiders, and which images and imaginations have been circulating. Even if this results in a

mixed bag of scattered information about the place itself complemented with exoticization, stereotypes, and colonial agendas, these representations, in turn, also had an impact on the town itself, be it in the actions of colonial officials, in the development of heritage tourism, or eventually in the self-perception of people of Kigoma-Ujiji themselves.

2.1 Visiting Kigoma-Ujiji since the Mid-Nineteenth Century

In this first subchapter, I give an overview of impressions of Ujiji by geographical explorers, one ivory trader, and missionaries from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. I reconstruct outsiders' expectations of Ujiji, their ways of rendering and thereby creating an image of Ujiji, as well as the transformation in the representation and perception of Ujiji from a hub of commerce and communication to the ghastly epitome of the slave trade. I deliberately organize this subchapter according to the attitudes of the outsiders, which were, more often than not, barely based on anything relating to Ujiji or Kigoma as such. Instead, they help answer questions such as which 'expectations' guided them, in how far did 'narrative' genre shape the travelogues, what were the real 'destinations' or motivations for visitors in Ujiji, how did representations shift in the 'transition' from exploration to colonization, and finally, how have we arrived at a 'confrontational' perception of Ujiji as the evil epicentre of slave trade by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

2.1.1 Expectation

Ujiji's first visitor to have left a written account was rather disappointed by what he encountered. Richard F. Burton, who was on a Royal Geographical Society mission in search for the source of the Nile together with John H. Speke, had expected to find a great town. Instead, when his caravan arrived in Ujiji's main quarter Kawele on 14 February 1858, this was his first impression:

At eight A.M., on the 14th of February, we began coasting along the eastern shore of the lake in a northwesterly direction, toward the Kawele district, in the land of Ujiji. The view was exceedingly beautiful:

*“. . . the flat sea shone like yellow gold
Fused in the sun,”*

and the picturesque and varied forms of the mountains, rising above and dipping into the lake, were clad in purplish blue, set off by the rosy tints of morning. Yet, more and more, as we approached our

destination, I wondered at the absence of all those features which prelude a popular settlement. Passing the low, muddy, and grass-grown mouth of the Ruche River, I could descry on the banks nothing but a few scattered hovels of miserable construction, surrounded by fields of sorghum and sugar-cane, and shaded by dense groves of the dwarf, bright-green plantain, and the tall, sombre elæis, or Guinea-palm. By the Arabs I had been taught to expect a town, a ghaut, a port, and a bazar, excelling in size that of Zanzibar, and I had old, preconceived ideas concerning “die Stadt Ujiji,” whose sire was the “Mombas Mission Map.” Presently mammoth and behemoth shrank timidly from exposure, and a few hollowed logs, the monoxyles of the fishermen, the wood-cutters, and the market-people, either cut the water singly, or stood in crowds drawn up on the patches of yellow sand. About 11 A.M. the craft was poled through a hole in a thick welting of coarse reedy grass and flaggy aquatic plants to a level landing place of flat shingle, where the water shoaled off rapidly. Such was the ghaut or disembarkation quay of the great Ujiji.¹

This first written eye-witness account makes clear that when Burton, Speke, and their company first set foot on the shores of Ujiji, the town obviously already had a reputation both among the Arabs in Zanzibar and in European writings. Thus, Burton's first impression tells us more about a representation of Ujiji, which had raised high expectations, than about the town itself.

In an earlier pre-publication of his travel account in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Burton was even more explicit in expressing his disappointment: “An unpleasant surprise [. . .] awaits the traveller, who, having read of and believed in ‘die Stadt Ujiji,’ expects to find a large town inhabited by Arab settlers, with extensive slave depots and plantations of rice”.²

His expectation of finding a great town on Lake Tanganyika had first been raised by the German missionaries Jakob Erhardt, Johannes Rebmann, and Johann Ludwig Krapf, who were at the service of the Church Missionary Society and stationed in Mombasa and Tanga on the East African coast. They gathered information from caravan traders about the interior and, based on this information, drew a map depicting a huge inland lake in the shape of a slug. This map was published in different journals in 1855 to 1856 and triggered the Royal Geographical Society's East Africa expedition by Burton and Speke. With hindsight, one could say that the “slug map” or, as Burton calls it, the “Mombas mission map” (Figure 1) lumped the African Great Lakes together into one massive sea.

1 Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 309.

2 Richard F. Burton, “The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa with Notices of the Lunar Mountains and the Sources of the White Nile; being the Results of an Expedition Undertaken Under the Patronage of Her Majesty's Government and the Royal Geographical Society of London, in the Years 1857–1859”, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* XXIX (1859): 215.

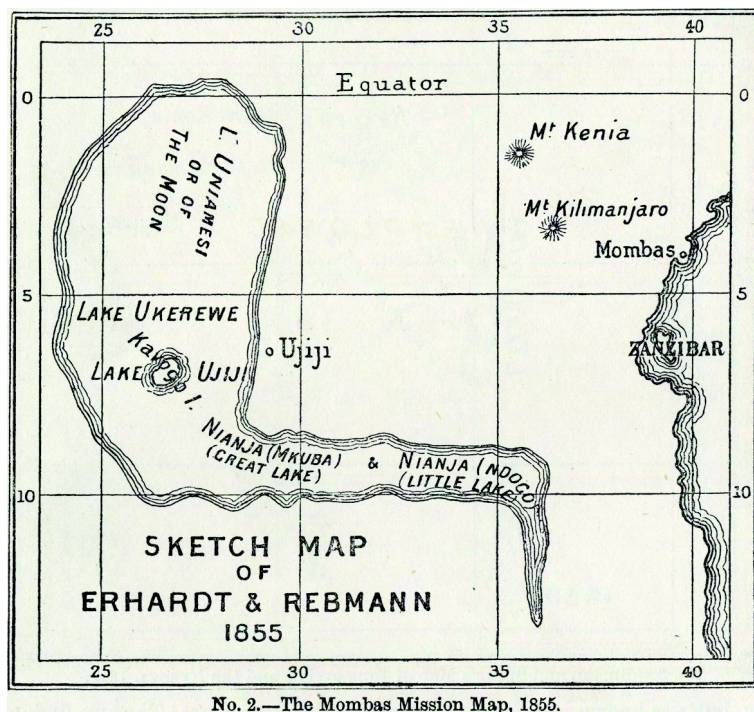


Figure 1: The Mombas Mission Map, 1855.³

A lot has been said about this map regarding the role of indigenous knowledge, caravan traders' conceptions of space, and its influence on geographic expeditions. Yet, in the context of the current research, I am primarily interested in the very concise information about Ujiji contained in the map. For one, Erhardt calls the central section of the inland "sea" Lake Ujiji and in the version of the map

³ The "Mombas Mission Map" or "Slug Map", published by Johann Rebmann and James J. Erhardt in *The Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society* 6 (1855): 209, has been retrieved from the Digital Collections of Illinois Library, <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/items/46d8d580-e946-0133-1d3d-0050569601ca-f> (accessed 30 September 2024). A more detailed map was published in: "Skizze einer Karte eines Theils von Ost- u. Central-Afrika. Mit Angabe der wahrscheinlichen Lage u. Ausdehnung des See's von Uniamesi, nebst Bezeichnung der Grenzen u. Wohnsitze der verschiedenen Völker sowie der Caravanen-Strassen nach dem Innern. Gestützt auf die Angaben zahlreicher Eingeborenen und muhamedanischer Reisenden und zusammengetragen von Jakob Erhardt u. Johann Rebmann, Missionare der Church Miss. Soc. of London in Ost-Afrika, nach J. Erhardt's Original und der Engl. Küsten Aufnahme gezeichnet von A. Petermann. Maaßstab 1:5 000 000" in *Mittheilungen aus Justus Perthes' Geographischer Anstalt* 2 (Gotha: Perthes 1856), table 1.

reproduced above Ujiji is the only town beyond the Indian Ocean coast. In the more detailed map drawn by Petermann based on Erhardt's information, there are no more than two sentences about the town itself:⁴

*The city of Ujiji is partly inhabited by Arabs from Zanzibar, who introduced rice cultivation. They trade in slaves and maintain large slave compounds.*⁵

It was not “die Stadt Ujiji” but rather the “Sea of Ujiji” – the hydrography in East and Central Africa – and solving the mystery of the Source of the Nile that motivated the Royal Geographical Society to send out an expedition to the area. Burton, however, was fascinated by Arab culture, had travelled – in disguise – to Medina and Mecca in 1853,⁶ and translated numerous works from Arabic to English, the most famous among which is *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (1885). Perhaps his innate fascination for Arab urbanity made him read more into these two short sentences than they actually professed. Yet, his expectations were not only based on “preconceived ideas concerning ‘die Stadt Ujiji,’ whose sire was the ‘Mombas Mission Map’”. They had risen even higher during his journey: “By the Arabs I had been taught to expect a town, a ghaut, a fort, and a bazar, excelling in size that of Zanzibar”. Against this background, Burton's first impression upon arrival in Ujiji is understandable:

*[A] hole in a thick welting of coarse reedy grass and flaggy aquatic plants to a level landing-place of flat shingle, where the water shoaled off rapidly. Such was the ghaut or disembarkation quay of the great Ujiji. Around the ghaut a few scattered huts, in the humblest beehive shape, represented the port town.*⁷

Rather than Burton himself, it is the following three aspects of his first impression that are relevant to our study. First of all, Burton's experience demonstrates the

4 Isabel Voigt, “Die ‘Schneckenkarte’: Mission, Kartographie und transkulturelle Wissensaushandlung in Ostafrika um 1850”, *Cartographica Helvetica* 45 (2012): 27–38; Adam Jones and Isabel Voigt, “‘Just a First Sketchy Makeshift’: German travellers and their cartographic encounters in Africa, 1850–1914”, *History in Africa* 39 (2012): 9–39; Adrian S. Wisnicki, “Charting the Frontier: Indigenous Geography, Arab-Nyamwezi Caravans, and the East African Expedition of 1856–59”, *Victorian Studies* 51, no. 1 (2008): 103–137; Adrian S. Wisnicki, *Fieldwork of Empire, 1840–1900: Intercultural Dynamics in the Production of British Expeditionary Literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

5 “Skizze einer Karte eines Theils von Ost- u. Central-Afrika”. Original in German: “Die Stadt Ujiji ist zum Theil von Arabern aus Zanzibar bewohnt, welche die Reis-Kultur eingeführt haben. Sie handeln mit Sklaven und halten grosse Sklaven-Depôts”.

6 Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1855–6), 3 vols.

7 Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 309.

importance of preconceived ideas and expectations for the treatment and representation of Ujiji. Even though the role of outside perspectives and perceptions are partly at odds with local realities, these realities are nonetheless influenced by the views and insights of outsiders.

Secondly, there indeed was not yet a town in Ujiji at the end of the 1850s. Ujiji already fulfilled a role as depot, market place, provisioning centre, and hub in the caravan trade complex as well as in regional trade around the lake; but as it will be argued in the next chapter, the process of urbanization leading to “the great Ujiji” that Burton already expected back in 1858 would take until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is remarkable, though, that even before there was an urban centre in Ujiji and before the first European reached the area, European authors – and perhaps Arab-Swahili caravan traders who were these Europeans’ source of information – already used Ujiji, which is, strictly speaking, the name for the land of the Wajiji, as the name of a town. Ujiji, thus, was already a liminal town, an expected but not-yet-town, and a “[n]ay to all positive structural assertions, but [. . .] in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, [. . .] a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise”.⁸

Thirdly, Burton’s account contains some tropes that characterize the travel accounts of visitors to Ujiji or Lake Tanganyika – or travelling through Africa more generally – throughout the nineteenth century, during the colonial period, and, to some extent, until today. The rather predictable pattern of travel accounts allows us to move more quickly over most of the European travellers who came after Burton and Speke. The outsider perspective on Ujiji was fixed quite early on, in fact, before the town as such even existed.

2.1.2 Narration

Particularly strong in the case of Burton but, more generally, characteristic of nineteenth-century visitors to Ujiji is the reliance on information given by Arabs or coastal Africans, while neglecting or even despising local Africans. I refrain from reproducing Burton’s loathful descriptions of “East Africans”,⁹ but I will provide some general traits of Burton’s observations and descriptions of local people, which also characterize later travelogues and colonial sources. Whereas “Arabs” –

⁸ Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 97.

⁹ See especially Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, Ch. XIX, 489, but racist stereotypes are to be found throughout the book.

which often includes coastal or Swahili Africans – are identified individually, “East Africans” – the term Burton uses to lump together people living in the East and Central African interior – are described collectively, as if they were part of the landscape. Even though Burton was interested in culture and had hoped to find a great town, he seemed more interested in landscape and commerce than in people – except if they were “Arab” people. It is a trait shared by many European travellers to Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ After Burton’s first impression upon arrival in Ujiji, his first observation shows how he subsumed people either under a description of scenery and trades or as Arabs:

Around the ghaut a few scattered huts, in the humblest beehive shape, represented the port-town. Advancing some hundred yards through a din of shouts and screams, tom-toms, and trumpets, which defies description, and mobbed by a swarm of black beings, whose eyes seemed about to start from their heads with surprise, I passed a relic of Arab civilization, the “bazar.” It is a plot of higher ground, cleared of grass, and flanked by a crooked tree; there, between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M.—weather permitting—a mass of standing and squatting [N] buy and sell, barter and exchange, offer and chaffer with a hubbub heard for miles, and there a spear or dagger thrust brings on, by no means unfrequently, a skirmishing faction-fight. The articles exposed for sale are sometimes goats, sheep, and poultry, generally fish, vegetables, and a few fruits, plantains, and melons; palm-wine is a staple commodity, and occasionally an ivory or a slave is hawked about: those industriously disposed employ themselves during the intervals of bargaining in spinning a coarse yarn with the rudest spindle, or in picking the cotton, which is placed in little baskets on the ground. I was led to a ruinous tembe, built by an Arab merchant, Hamid bin Salim, who had allowed it to be tenanted by ticks and slaves. Situated, however, half a mile from, and backed by, the little village of Kawele, whose mushroom-huts barely protruded their summits above the dense vegetation, and placed at a similar distance from the water in front, it had the double advantage of proximity to provisions, and of a view which at first was highly enjoyable. The Tanganyika is ever seen to advantage from its shores: upon its surface the sight wearies with the unvarying tintage—all shining greens and hazy blues—while continuous parallels of lofty hills, like the sides of a huge trough, close the prospect and suggest the idea of confinement.¹¹*

The fragment about his first day in Ujiji, about arriving and installing in the not-yet-town, ends with another recurrent trope of travellers to Ujiji: the awe felt when sighting Lake Tanganyika after a long journey. Mary Louise Pratt, whose almost 30-year-old monograph *Imperial Eyes* remains a seminal reference for the historical study of travel writing, quotes at length from Burton’s first sighting of the lake on the previous day, 13 February 1858. Although her book is primarily concerned with travels to the Americas during the imperial age, Pratt calls Burton’s “discovery” of

¹⁰ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007 [1992]).

¹¹ Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 309–310. I choose not to spell out the N-word, but replace it with [N*] instead.

Lake Tanganyika “one of my favorites in the monarch-of-all-I-survey genre”. Burton marvelled at the beauty of the lake – he allegedly just “discovered” – using esthetizing language, densifying meaning by referring to his own home culture (using references to plum, steel, snow, etc.), and claiming mastery over “his discovery” by at the same time depicting himself as the seer, while acting as the author defining what is (to be) seen.¹² Pratt’s quote starts with the following:

Nothing, in sooth, could be more picturesque than this first view of the Tanganyika Lake, as it lay in the lap of the mountains, basking in the gorgeous tropical sunshine.

It ends with:

[A]ll the fairest prospects in these regions wants but a little of the neatness and finish of art—mosques and kiosks, palaces and villas, gardens and orchards—contrasting with the profuse lavishness and magnificence of nature, and diversifying the unbroken coup d’œil of excessive vegetation, to rival, if not to excel, the most admired scenery of the classic regions.¹³

The depiction evokes admiration for the natural scenery as well as a description of a lack of culture, whereby the classic regions and the Islamic world figure as the reference of what is lacking. This, obviously, tells us something about Burton and about “imperial eyes”, but very little about Ujiji and the people living there. As a source for the urban history of Kigoma-Ujiji, Richard Burton or, more generally, the European travellers may seem irrelevant. However, for a global history of Kigoma-Ujiji, the outsider perspective on the town and even stereotypes do matter, as they have an impact on developments in the town and have been reproduced until today in popular culture representations and references to Kigoma-Ujiji, as elaborated in the next subchapter.

Nevertheless, I find the paragraphs before and after Pratt’s quote from Burton’s “discovery” of Lake Tanganyika more revealing. Burton’s report of 13 February 1858 opens with the following:

On the 13th of February we resumed our travel through screens of lofty grass, which thinned out into a straggling forest. After about an hour’s march, as we entered a small savanna, I saw the fundi before alluded to running forward and changing the direction of the caravan. Without supposing that he had taken upon himself this responsibility, I followed him. Presently he breasted a steep and stony hill, sparsely clad with thorny trees: it was the death of my companion’s riding-ass. Arrived with toil—for our fagged beasts now refused to proceed—we halted for a few minutes upon the summit. “What is that streak of light which lies below?” I inquired of Seedy Bombay. “I am of

¹² Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 197–201; quote on 197.

¹³ Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 307–308.

opinion,” quoth Bombay, “that that is the water.” I gazed in dismay; the remains of my blindness, the veil of trees, and a broad ray of sunshine illuminating but one reach of the lake, had shrunk its fair proportions. Somewhat prematurely I began to lament my folly in having risked life and lost health for so poor a prize, to curse Arab exaggeration, and to propose an immediate return, with the view of exploring the Nyanza, or Northern Lake. Advancing, however, a few yards, the whole scene suddenly burst upon my view, filling me with admiration, wonder, and delight.¹⁴

It is pretty clear from this fragment that either the *fundi* – i.e. the steward or manager of the caravan, which was Said bin Salim at the time – or “Seedy Bombay” took Burton to the site where he could view Lake Tanganyika. Sidi Mubarak Bombay was perhaps the most influential “British” traveller to East and Central Africa in the nineteenth century. Born around 1820 among the Yao people in what is today the border region between Tanzania and Mozambique, he was enslaved as a child and sent across the Indian Ocean to Gujarat. When his “owner” died, he was set free and returned to East Africa in the 1850s where he joined the army of the Sultan of Zanzibar. There, in 1857, he was hired by Speke as his personal guide, guard, and interpreter. Speke and Mubarak both spoke Hindi. Towards the end of the expedition Mubarak would replace the caravan manager Said bin Salim, who was a Swahili or coastal African – “half-caste Arab of Zanzibar” in the words of Burton. Speke hired Sidi Mubarak again as caravan manager for his next expedition, which, however, did not take him to Ujiji. Henry M. Stanley and Verney L. Cameron, who reached Ujiji in 1871 and 1874 respectively, also relied on the services of Sidi Mubarak Bombay. “As a result, Mubarak became the most widely travelled man in Africa, having covered some 9,600km [. . .] overland”. He died in 1885.¹⁵

A final trope I want to highlight is touched upon in the fragment immediately following the estheticizing monarch-of-all-I-survey quote by Pratt:

The riant shores of this vast crevasse appeared doubly beautiful to me after the silent and spectral mangrove-creeks on the East African sea-board, and the melancholy, monotonous experience of desert and jungle scenery, tawny rock and sun-parched plain or rank herbage and flats of black mire. Truly it was a revel for soul and sight. Forgetting toils, dangers, and the doubtfulness of return, I felt willing to

¹⁴ Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 306–307.

¹⁵ John H. Speke, *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London: Blackwood, 1864), 210–212; Royal Geographical Society, “Hidden histories of Black geographers”, <https://www.rgs.org/about-us/our-work/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/black-geographers-past-present-future/hidden-histories-of-black-geographers> (accessed 30 September 2024); Royal Geographical Society, “Exploring Africa Fact Sheet: Sidi Mubarak Bombay,” <https://www.rgs.org/schools/resources-for-schools/exploring-africa> (accessed 30 September 2024); Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 26 and 431–432.

*endure double what I had endured; and all the party seemed to join with me in joy. My purblind companion found nothing to grumble at except the "mist and glare before his eyes." Said bin Salim looked exulting—he had procured for me this pleasure—the monocular jemadar grinned his congratulations, and even the surly Baloch made civil salams.*¹⁶

Burton's marvelling at the beauty of the lake is typically contrasted with the hardships of a long journey. In his case, the trip from the coast to Ujiji had taken more than eight months and he had fallen ill several times along the way. His companion Speke also suffered and was in bad shape when they arrived at the lake and in Ujiji.¹⁷ Yet, as a trope in travel writing, stressing the hardship and health hazards also functions as a narrative device highlighting the larger-than-life heroism of the adventurous voyagers. The aura of self-sacrifice or putting oneself in danger for the sake of scientific progress, humanity, and civilization contributed to the appeal of travel writing. There was clearly an ambivalence between seeing hardship and health hazards both as a curse and as a blessing. This nexus of heroism and suffering was already contained in the secular writings of Burton and others but was even more pronounced in the missionary mythology of martyrdom. The long list of missionary expeditions that failed due to illness or death in the *History of the London Missionary Society*, for instance, tellingly figures under the heading "Legacy of Heroism": "[O]n one of the expeditions which cost so much in lives and health [. . .] east of Lake Tanganyika, his health broke down", "another of the pioneers whose attempt to start work at Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika was thwarted by ill health", "after an eight months' journey and many vicissitudes [he] managed to reach Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika in 1885, but illness drove him back to England", "members of the fourth of the series of abortive expeditions [to] the shores of Lake Tanganyika [. . .] experienced the all too familiar sequence of obstacles and mishaps, and [. . .] the losses by death and illness nearly brought this undertaking – like its predecessors – to an end. [. . .] his health made further work with the London Missionary Society impossible [. . .] after sixteen years' heroic and faithful service," and so it goes on and on.¹⁸

¹⁶ Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 308.

¹⁷ Not only did Speke not give any first impression of the lake and of Ujiji upon arrival, as his illness had turned him blind at the time, but in his writings he also provides very little information about Ujiji. Only his unsympathetic description of the chief Kannina and the statement "Ujiji being the only district [on Lake Tanganyika] where canoes are obtainable" are as much as one can learn about the place. See John H. Speke, "Journal of a Cruise on the Tanganyika Lake, Central Africa", *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine* 86 (1859): 342–343.

¹⁸ Norman A. Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895–1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 255–256, 267 and 274–275. The examples are limited to cases explicitly referring to Ujiji or Lake Tanganyika.

These self-applauding narrations of self-sacrifice make us aware that our prime sources – as, for lack of alternatives, these fragments give an impression of the source base for the nineteenth-century history of the area – reflect other motivations, concerns, and priorities than giving us insights into the town-in-the-making.

2.1.3 Destination

I do not want to dwell much longer on this European mindset, yet it sheds some light on the place of Ujiji in these travels. Ujiji was not the destination, let alone the purpose, of this journeying. Granted Burton had hoped to find a great town in 1858; in the late 1870s and 1880s, the expeditions of the London Missionary Society aimed for a suitable location for a mission station in the Lake Tanganyika area; and in 1871, Stanley found what he was looking for in Ujiji, although his destination was not the place but Dr. Livingstone, who happened to be recovering from illness in Ujiji. Rather than the destination, Ujiji was a symbolic stop at the heart of the journeys that were only halfway through when the travellers paused there. The travelogues can be compared with road movies, where the journey overshadows the stops. Burton and Speke, as well as Stanley in his first voyage, still had to return; Cameron, as well as Stanley during his second passage, still had to move on; and most of the missionaries, who attempted to settle in Ujiji before formal colonization reached the area in the late 1890s, either died or had to leave the place shortly after their arrival. Expeditions, missions, or even later colonial inspection tours did not target but moved through Ujiji. If we understand these expeditions or missions as defining life moments, as rites of passage for the voyagers involved, then Ujiji was at the heart of the long and lingering liminal phase that constituted the journey as a whole. Ujiji was a site of repose and recovery, idyllically situated on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, but the ones who rested knew all too well that all what had already been endured was awaiting the caravan once again on the return or onward journey. In several instances, Ujiji also became a place of demise, which underscores the uncertain and insecure outcome of the liminal phase.

Neither the liminality nor the transformation was concentrated much on Ujiji, but Ujiji was a stepping stone in a protracted process of transformation that took place primarily on the road. This peregrine perspective on transformation in nineteenth-century East and Central Africa also guides the next chapter, where I interpret the process of urbanization in the region as taking place first and foremost within the mobile caravan trade complex, until Swahili urbanity gradually took hold in specific locations. Ujiji would become one of the most important towns evolving out of this mobile urbanization. This

process goes well beyond the outside perspectives and perceptions that are addressed in this chapter. Yet, these nineteenth-century outsiders' imaginations, too, were constructed out of experiences and observations in the caravan trade complex – be it based on Erhardt and Rebmann collecting information from caravans arriving on the coast or more directly on later travellers having their caravans composed and reorganized in Zanzibar, on the coast, in Tabora, Ujiji, or other hubs of the caravan complex.

This function of Ujiji, amongst a couple of other places, as a hub also becomes clear from one of the few non-European written testimonies about nineteenth-century East and Central Africa: the autobiography of Hamad bin Mohammad al-Murjebi, aka Tippu Tip. In his *Maisha* or life story, written in Zanzibar on the instigation of the German consul Heinrich Bode, Tippu Tip refers to Ujiji on eight occasions, but not once does he give information about the place itself. Ujiji is important for its role in the caravan complex and not for its own sake. As Tippu Tip narrated his autobiography from his memory in the first years of the twentieth century when he was in his mid-60s, it is not always easy to reconstruct the chronology of his life story, especially concerning the early years of his narrative. After four sentences about his childhood, he mentions his first caravan trip together with his father at the age of 18, which brings him to Ujiji for the first time. In line with the European tropes mentioned before, Tippu Tip fell ill with smallpox. That must have been in the second half of the 1850s, in other words, at about the same time that Burton and Speke travelled through the region. He mentions that the ivory trade was not going well and he continued across the lake without his father.¹⁹ All we can tell from this message is that Ujiji was a hub in the caravan trade complex, where caravans were reorganized in order to move on or travel back, much like Tabora, from where Tippu Tip's father coordinated his operations. I will come back to trade and navigation on the lake in the next chapter.

The next occasion when we learn about Ujiji, is when Tippu Tip was about a thousand kilometres away from the place. In July 1867, he met David Livingstone several hundred kilometres south of Lake Tanganyika close to what is nowadays the border region between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After Tippu Tip provided escorts for Livingstone on several of his travels in the area, the latter requested help from Tippu Tip with the shipment of some trunks from the coast to Ujiji. Incidentally, Jiji copper traders were in the area as well. Among them was also Hebee (Hebeya), a *mteko* or official for the land in the Ugoi

19 François Bontinck, *L'autobiographie de Hamed ben Mohammed el-Murjebi Tippu Tip (ca. 1840–1905)* (Brussels: Académie royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1974), 21, 41–42 and 179 n5.

quarter and a leading figure in the Kawele quarter of Ujiji who had good relations with the Swahili-Arabs in Ujiji and whom Tippu Tip called a friend of his.²⁰ Tippu Tip asked Hebeya to take care of Livingstone's trunks and, according to his account, paid Hebeya for this job.²¹ It was no sooner than March 1869 that Livingstone visited Ujiji for the first time. But two years before this date, he had already engaged with an Arab-Swahili caravan trader, who in turn relied on a Jiji local leader involved in long-distance regional trade to ship his supplies to Ujiji. In fact, Livingstone had already ordered this shipment when he was still on the coast in March 1866.²² A lot has been written about the good relations between Livingstone and Tippu Tip, one of the most notorious denouncers of the slave trade and one of the most notorious slave traders in the region, but that is beyond our concern here.²³ We also know from Livingstone's diaries that in the end the shipment went wrong.²⁴ Yet, what I derive from this configuration is that for a thousand kilometres in all directions, Ujiji was a hub, depot, provisioning station, and prime point of reference for caravans between the Indian Ocean coast and Central Africa in the 1860s. It was not necessarily the place to be, but it was a relay of the utmost importance; not yet a town, but a hub in the caravan trade complex.

The centre of gravity of Tippu Tip's operations moved to the Manyema area in what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in particular to the towns of Nyangwe and, above all, Kasongo.²⁵ For Tippu Tip, Ujiji was a logistic relay to ship ivory to the Indian Ocean coast, for which he needed good relations with the local leaders, of which the Jiji leader Hebeya, the Swahili strongman Mwinyi Heri, and the coastal Arab merchant Mohammad bin Khalfan al-Barwani – aka Rumaliza – were the most important to secure his commercial-strategic interests.²⁶ Although ivory trade was Tippu Tip's main concern, this relied heavily

²⁰ For more information about the Jiji leadership roles, including the *mteko*, as well as about Hebeya himself, see subchapter 3.3.1. The Pangani Triumvirate.

²¹ Bontinck, *L'autobiographie*, 56–57; Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. I, 222.

²² Bontinck, *L'autobiographie*, 203 n103.

²³ See, for instance, Andrew Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire* (London: Hambledon Press, 2002), 209; Andrew Roberts, "Tippu Tip, Livingstone, and the Chronology of Kazembe", *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 2, no. 1 (1967): 115–131.

²⁴ Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. II, 6–8.

²⁵ Contrary to Burton's disappointed impression of Ujiji, Kasongo must have been a "proper" town by the mid-1870s at the latest, when Tippu Tip first arrived there and around the same time that Verney L. Cameron travelled through the area. See Bontinck, *L'autobiographie*, 99 and 242 n286, who in turn refers to the Leipzig-born and -trained explorer Oskar Lenz: "Kasongo fait l'effet d'une ville" (Oskar Lenz, "L'expédition autrichienne au Congo", *Bulletin de la Société Royale Belge de Géographie* 11 (1887): 226).

²⁶ See, for instance, Bontinck, *L'autobiographie*, 113–114, 131–133 and 149–150.

on political alliances and wars, capturing and trading of enslaved people, and armed control of trade routes whenever caravans had to move through. To this end, he depended on his lines of communication. Maintaining good relations with local leaders – or defeating them if good relations were not an option –, with Swahili-Arab leaders in East and Central Africa as well as with Europeans moving through or settling in the wider Central African region, who in turn often depended on Tippu Tip for provisioning or escorting, made Tippu Tip the pivotal figure in Central Africa by the 1880s. The caravan trade complex was not only a commercial but also a communication infrastructure and Ujiji was a hub for both. This also becomes clear from the testimony of Livingstone, who on 10 December 1867, before ever having been in Ujiji, wrote: “I am so tired of exploration without a word from home or anywhere else for two years, that I must go to Ujiji on Tanganyika for letters before doing anything else”.²⁷ For that part of the continent, Ujiji was the link to the outside world – and vice versa.

I have dwelled quite long on the first written eye-witness account and the most prominent non-European written source on the pre- and proto-colonial periods,²⁸ yet I have done so in order to shed light on more general traits of the outside perception and representation of Ujiji as well as on Ujiji as a hub for commerce and communication within the caravan trade complex. The next chapter takes up the latter point as the frame of reference for Swahili urbanization. In the remainder of this subchapter, I juxtapose the perception and representation of Ujiji with direct experiences of the place.

2.1.4 Transition

By the mid-1870s, five Europeans had visited Ujiji and reported on it.²⁹ They were all British, they were all interested in geographical exploration, and they all relied on Sidi Mubarak Bombay or on Tippu Tip, or on both. This picture changed from the second half of the 1870s onwards. At the height of the caravan trade, we witness a proliferation of backgrounds and motivations of Europeans travelling through the area. Missionary and military motivations, Belgian and French missions, German and Dutch travellers followed in the wake of the British geographi-

²⁷ Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. I, 261. Oskar Lenz also mentions the reliable delivery of correspondence via Ujiji (Oskar Lenz, *Wanderungen in Afrika: Studien und Erlebnisse* [Wien: Verlag der literarischen Gesellschaft, 1895], 107).

²⁸ Although Tippu Tip's autobiography was partly also “European”, as it was the German consul Heinrich Brode who registered it.

²⁹ Burton, Speke, Livingstone, Stanley and Cameron.

cal expeditions.³⁰ Nonetheless, for most of the travellers, Ujiji remained an entry point to Central Africa rather than a destination in its own right. Increasingly, military expeditions also circumvented Ujiji, establishing their own stations on both shores of Lake Tanganyika. Missionary expeditions, too, sometimes had a semi-military quality, both depending on and hostile to Arab-Swahili strongholds in the region.³¹ Parallel to the growth of Ujiji as a town and a centre from which a surrounding area was dominated (see Chapters 3 and 8), European expeditions reduced their reliance on the town to gain access to Central Africa from the east. Above all, the hostility towards the Arab-Swahili from the side of the Belgian King Leopold II's expeditions and enterprises led to the deviation of caravans via Karemama, on the one hand,³² and access to Central Africa from the west, on the other. Consequently, until the German colonial conquest in the second half of the 1890s, it was primarily missionaries who kept travelling via Ujiji.

The first missionary in Ujiji had been Livingstone in 1869 – although he had already left the London Missionary Society by then. In his *Last Journals* he wrote very little about the place, but more about its people – and it was not friendly. He depicted what he called “Ujijians” as “worse than [. . .] the traders from Ujiji”,³³ who, in turn, were “the vilest of the vile” according to Livingstone.³⁴ He gave this impression of “Ujijians” while in the Manyema region of the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is clear from his descriptions that “Ujijians” does not refer to the Jiji people or Wajiji, although there may have been some Wajiji who participated in what Livingstone called the “*Ujijian* trading [of] plunder and murder”.³⁵ Although he did not explain what he meant by the categories he used, he probably made a distinction between two rival factions of caravan traders from Ujiji, one group led by Omani “Arabs” – often partly of African descent –, who were his primary source of information, and one group led by people from the Swahili coast, whom he probably referred to as “Ujijians” (see Chapters 3 and 4). The distinction from “Arabs” transpires from his assertion about “Ujijians”

30 The Protestant London Missionary Society and the Catholic *Missionnaires d'Afrique* or White Fathers, as well as the Belgian King Leopold II's *Association internationale africaine* were the most active organisations in the area between the mid-1870s and formal colonisation.

31 Adam Jones and Geert Castryck, “Mission Spaces in German East Africa: Spatial Imaginations, Implementations, and Incongruities against the Backdrop of an Emerging Colonial Spatial Order” in *Transnational Religious Spaces: Religious Organizations and Interactions in Africa, East Asia, and Beyond*, (eds.) Philip Clart and Adam Jones (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 51–83.

32 See, for instance, Lionel Declé, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (London: Methuen, 1898), 288 and 307–309.

33 Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. II, 107.

34 Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. II, 11.

35 Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. II, 67. Italics added.

that “they are nearly all miserable *Suaheli* at Ujiji, and have neither the manners nor the sense of *Arabs*”.³⁶ “[T]hey thirst for blood more than for ivory, each longs to be able to tell a tale of blood, and the *Manyuema* are an easy prey”.³⁷ I do not want to attach too much value to Livingstone’s assessment per se, but it is remarkable that around 1870 he juggled with these four categories of people – Ujijian, Suaheli, Manyuema, and Arab –, which would structure communities and conflicts in Ujiji until the mid-twentieth century, as we will see later. However, the distinction between Swahili and Arab was in fact a gradual question of status: Swahilization was a process that was still in the making at the time of Livingstone’s writing. Manyema would become a prominent part of that Swahili-Arab urbanity and “Ujijians” encompassed people from around the northern half of Lake Tanganyika, who would rival Manyema for over half a century. There is more to gather from Livingstone’s spiteful statements than he could have possibly known when he wrote them.

Where Burton had expected a great town, which was echoed in a comment by the editor of Dr. Livingstone’s *Last Journals*,³⁸ the missionary doctor stained Ujiji with the odium of being the evil slave trading centre in Central Africa. Combined with its hub function and reputation, this turned Ujiji’s perception into the interface between alleged civilized and savage worlds, between damnation and redemption; in short, into a liminal town. Ujiji was already charged with reputations before first visitors took the effort to describe the place.

The most renowned association between Livingstone and Ujiji is, without doubt, the reporter Henry M. Stanley finding him there, recovering from illness, in November 1871. Stanley’s famous salutation “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” is part of the European canon of how colonial history is represented. The meeting as such is a banal anecdote, but it is at the same time a culmination of European fascination with the heroic explorer’s trope mentioned before, as well as, with hindsight, a transition point from exploration to colonization, symbolized in the missionary geographical explorer who had just become an ardent critic of the slave trade and in the newspaper reporter who would become a colonial conqueror at the service of Leopold II. Because the meeting of Stanley and Livingstone is not only part of outsider representation of Ujiji but became the ultimate icon of that representation and of the “Scramble for Africa” more generally, I go deeper into this event in the next subchapter, where Kigoma-Ujiji in global popular culture is addressed.

³⁶ Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. II, 12. Italics added.

³⁷ Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. II, 107–108. Italics added.

³⁸ “At last he reached the great Arab settlement at Ujiji, on the eastern shore of Tanganyika”; Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. II, 6.

Besides the iconic meeting, Stanley gives us a first impression of daily life in the town or, more precisely, of the marketplace:

The market-place overlooking the broad silver water afforded us amusement and instruction. Representatives of most of the tribes dwelling near the lake were daily found there. There were the agricultural and pastoral Wajiji, with their flocks and herds; there were the fishermen from Ukaranga and Kaole, from beyond Bangwe, and even from Urundi, with their whitebait, which they called dogara, the silurus, the perch, and other fish; there were the palm-oil merchants, principally from Ujiji and Urundi, with great five-gallon pots full of reddish oil, of the consistency of butter; there were the salt merchants from the salt-plains of Uvinza and Uhha; there were the ivory merchants from Uvira and Usowa; there were the canoe-makers from Ugoma and Urundi; there were the cheap-Jack pedlers from Zanzibar, selling flimsy prints, and brokers exchanging blue mutunda beads for sami-sami, and sungomazzi, and sofi. The sofi beads are like pieces of thick clay-pipe stem about half an inch long, and are in great demand here. Here were found Waguhha, Wamanyuema, Wagoma, Wavira, Wasige, Warundi, Wajiji, Waha, Wavinza, Wasowa, Wangwana, Wakawendi, Arabs, and Wasawahili, engaged in noisy chaffer and barter.³⁹

In this brief description, Stanley managed to identify the different groups with more precision than Livingstone's four categories mentioned above. Although Livingstone had spent many years in Africa, never in his life had he travelled the caravan route from the coast to Ujiji, whereas Stanley had just spent more than seven months in such a caravan. This probably explains why Stanley already had a better understanding of the different groups that composed the ecosystem of the caravan trade complex and, consequently, of the emergent town of Ujiji in the early 1870s.

In 1876, Stanley returned to Ujiji, as part of an expedition to further clarify the hydrography in the African Great Lakes region and, still, to gain confirmation of the source of the Nile. He describes Ujiji as “a long straggling village, formed by the large tembes of the Arabs” and notes that “nothing was changed much, except the ever-changing mud tembés of the Arabs”.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, in 1874, Verney L. Cameron had also visited Ujiji. However, while in Ujiji, none of the European visitors was really interested in the town, but rather in checking supplies, organizing the onward journey, social talk with “Arabs”, at best a page-long impression of the market,⁴¹ perhaps recovering from illness, and also,

³⁹ Henry M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries in Central Africa: Including an Account of Four Months' Residence with Dr. Livingstone* (London: Low, Low & Searle, 1872), 473–474.

⁴⁰ Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent or the Sources of the Nile around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1878), vol. I, 45 and 509.

⁴¹ Cameron provided a similar description of the market in 1874 as Stanley had given in 1871; Verney L. Cameron, *Across Africa* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), vol. I, 175–176.

since 1871, the memories of Livingstone.⁴² “The grand old hero, whose presence once filled Ujiji with such absorbing interest for me was gone!” laments Stanley in the final sentence of the first volume of *Through the Dark Continent*. No better way to state that Ujiji did not interest him, per se. As always, outside expectations and imaginations overlay the tiny glimpses of the town we catch.

2.1.5 Confrontation

Shortly after Stanley’s second passage through Ujiji in 1878, the first European travellers who intended on establishing themselves in the town arrived at Lake Tanganyika. A few of them indeed stayed in the area for several years and published written accounts of their experiences. The titles of their memoirs stress their relatively lengthy stays in the Lake Tanganyika area. Edward C. Hore, who was a lay missionary and mariner for the London Missionary Society who stayed in the area from 1878 till 1888, wrote *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa*.⁴³ Although he was supposed to be in charge of navigation on the lake and to launch a small steamship as soon as feasible, he soon became the leading figure of the protestant mission in the region, as the ordained missionaries died shortly after their arrival. One year later, in 1879, the Catholic *Missionnaires d’Afrique* or White Fathers also arrived in Ujiji with the intention to establish themselves permanently in the town. François Coulbois, who arrived in 1883 and stayed in the area until 1891, authored the most extensive White Fathers’ account, *Dix années au Tanganyka*, similarly stressing – and slightly exaggerating – the length of his stay.⁴⁴ A few months before Coulbois, Alfred J. Swann, who was, like Hore, a lay missionary and mariner for the London Missionary Society, arrived in Ujiji and stayed in the region until 1909. His memoirs also mention the length of the stay, but he explicitly foregrounds his intrinsic motivation – at least with hindsight – in *Fighting the Slave-hunters in Central Africa: A Record of Twenty-six Years of Travel & Adventure round the Great Lakes and of the Overthrow of Tip-pu-tib, Rumlaliza and other Great Slave-traders*.⁴⁵ Hore, by contrast, had expressed his gratitude to the same Tippu Tip and Mohammed-bin-Alfan – i.e. Rumlaliza – “for the

⁴² Cameron, *Across Africa*, 179; Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, vol. I, 509.

⁴³ Edward C. Hore, *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa* (London: E. Stanford, 1892).

⁴⁴ François Coulbois, *Dix années au Tanganyka* (Limoges: P. Dumont, 1901).

⁴⁵ Alfred J. Swann, *Fighting the Slave-hunters in Central Africa: A Record of Twenty-six Years of Travel & Adventure Round the Great Lakes and of the Overthrow of Tip-pu-tib, Rumlaliza and other Great Slave-traders* (London: Seeley, 1910). A second edition of the book, published in 1969 with Frank Cass, contains an extensive introduction by Norman R. Bennett.

maintenance of peace” and “for hospitality, for aid in imminent peril, and frequent assistance and information”.⁴⁶ A difference in temper undoubtedly explains the contrast to some extent; but above all, it was the fact that a lot had changed in the 20 odd years between Hore’s departure from Lake Tanganyika in 1888 and Swann leaving in 1909 which resulted in their differing rhetoric. Tippu Tip, Rumlaliza, and the like were at the height of their powers when Hore left. By the time Swann left the area, however, their entire realm had been swept away by gruesome violence and blatant betrayal during colonial wars of conquest by imperial troops of the Belgian king and the German Empire.⁴⁷ In the following chapters, I elaborate on the effects of these evolutions on the town and its population in as far as they directly concern Ujiji. In this chapter, I pay attention to the additional and gradually dominant layer of significance that was grafted upon the perception and representation of Ujiji: the evil slave-trading centre.

When Hore arrived, his firm intention was still to found a mission station in the town. After ephemeral attempts in town both by the London Missionary Society and by the White Fathers, missionary stations were established in places around the lake rather than in the town of Ujiji. As a consequence, of all our nineteenth-century informants, Hore is probably the one to pay the most attention to the town itself. He calls Ujiji “a big town” that used to be “the terminal depot” for caravan traders but had lost this position to Nyangwe and Kasongo and by the late 1870s, had “become rather a station on the road to those places than a position of independent importance”. He highlights the “variety of people, languages, and customs” as well as the dominance of the “Arabs”, by which he means “all those – pure Orientals, Waswahili, Beloochis, and half-castes of every shade – who have come there as civilised people from a distance”.⁴⁸ One can problematize this classification, but in comparison to most other European travellers in the second half of the century, Hore stands out by unpacking the category

⁴⁶ Hore, *Tanganyika*, viii–ix.

⁴⁷ The “Arab wars” (1892–1894) and the suppression of the Batetela mutinies (1895–1901/8) in the Congo Free State as well as the crushing of the Abushiri (1888–1889) and the Maji Maji uprisings (1905–1907) in German East Africa are the most notorious examples. See Benoît Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo, Tôme II: Maniema* (Bruxelles: Centre de recherche et d’information socio-politiques, 1969); Guy De Boeck, *Baoni: Les révoltes de la force publique sous Léopold II: Congo 1895–1908* (Berchem: EPO, 1987); Philippe Marechal, *De Arabische campagne in het Maniema-gebied (1892–1894): situering binnen het kolonisatieproces in de Onafhankelijke Kongostaat* (Tervuren: Museum voor Midden-Afrika, 1992); Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888* (Oxford: James Currey, Education, 1995); Felicitas Becker and Jigal Beez (eds.), *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika, 1905–1907* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2005).

⁴⁸ Hore, *Tanganyika*, 69–70.

“Arabs” in the first place. He wrote more pitifully about the “natives”, who seemed to accept Arab rule and arbitrariness, and explained the ambivalent relation between enslaved people and free labourers, whereby the former could easily be better dressed than and commanding the latter.⁴⁹

We also find the first relatively detailed description of the town’s outline in Hore’s account:

Thirty or forty large flat-roofed Arab houses (tembes), mostly hollow squares with massive walls and broad verandahs, form the principal feature of the town, and, with erections of every kind between that and the little grass bee-hive hut,—very irregularly placed amidst straggling oil-palms, bananas, and fruit-gardens,—make up the metropolis of Ujiji. A few winding tracks between these, worn down by common consent and use in the direction of greatest general convenience, form the streets or roads, mostly converging eventually upon the market-place. The market is essentially a native institution, and as such may be seen here and there over the whole territory of Ujiji and Urundi. But here in the town it is the meeting-place of all the various classes. The real native Mjiji from the hills brings his goats and produce; the poor Mswahili builds a little booth of palm leaves, and investing all his capital in a goat, displays his joints and penny lots of meat, warranted as being killed in true Mohammedan fashion. His wife may be close at hand with a jar of palm oil, which she retails in tiny gourd measures for cooking or lighting; towards the cool of the evening she lights a little fire under the jar to keep the oil liquid.⁵⁰

The contrast between Hore’s description and Swann’s first impression could not be more telling. Standing in Ujiji, looking over Lake Tanganyika, Swann ponders as follows:

Beyond this I could picture the Congo, with its mysteries, cannibalism, and wealth. I tried to enter into Livingstone’s thoughts as he stood here, wondering whether this mass of water was the source of the Nile. I knew that at this spot Africa’s greatest missionary explorer was found by the intrepid Stanley. It was an historic spot. Here centred all the villainy which for centuries had cruelly oppressed the coloured races, and here the Arabs were, as they thought, established in their impregnable fortress. Little did they imagine that yonder howling crowd of East Coast porters had deposited in their midst a British ensign which, in company with those of Germany and of Belgium, would soon fly over the ruins of their vile trade-centres.⁵¹

Likewise, Coulbois associates Ujiji with vile evil:

Ujiji! Town with a sinister name! Ujiji was the centre of the importation of slaves from Central Africa and from the banks of the Congo to the island of Zanzibar [. . .] Ujiji! An Arab city by its influence, an African

⁴⁹ Hore, *Tanganyika*, 70 and 72–74.

⁵⁰ Hore, *Tanganyika*, 70–71.

⁵¹ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-hunters*, 74.

*city by its character. A singular mixture of a fake civilization and a savageness that is worthy and even preferable to it.*⁵²

Ujiji was no longer perceived as the great Arab town that Burton had hoped to find, nor was it the entry point to map the hydrography of the African Great Lakes and rivers. It now epitomized the abhorrent centre of the slave trade amidst savage Africa. In parallel, it was the place where the two mariners of the London Missionary Society put steamships on the lake. In short, by then, Ujiji was framed to both legitimize and implement colonial conquest.

2.2 Representation and Perception of Kigoma-Ujiji in Popular Culture

The popular perception of Ujiji has largely been shaped by the nineteenth-century travelogues and memoirs studied in the previous subchapter, with the meeting of Stanley and Livingstone as the outstanding moment in which geographical exploration, adventure and self-sacrifice, humanitarian or abolitionist zeal, and a window towards colonization are condensed. However, the appearance of Ujiji and increasingly also of Kigoma in popular culture have continued well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In this subchapter, I briefly illustrate how reality and fiction have become intertwined and mutually informed each other with regard to Kigoma and Lake Tanganyika. I focus on the meeting of Livingstone and Stanley in 1871, the movie *The African Queen*, and Pasolini's 1970 *Notes for an African Orestes* (*Appunti per un'Orestide africana*). There are several more recent novels and television series referring to Kigoma-Ujiji, but they basically amount to the same argument: taken together, these instances of popular culture dealing with Kigoma-Ujiji produce and reproduce a pattern of both paying attention to and ignoring the place and of seeing it as both outlying and central at the same time.

Basically, Kigoma-Ujiji has already been present in European popular culture for about a century and a half. History textbooks about nineteenth-century colonization seldom fail to mention the 1871 meeting of Dr. David Livingstone and

⁵² Quoted in M. Vanneste, "Coulbois (François)" in *Biographie Coloniale Belge* (Bruxelles: Institut royal colonial belge, 1958), vol. V, col. 168. French original: "Ujiji! Ville au nom sinistre! Ujiji a été le centre de l'importation des esclaves de l'Afrique centrale et des rives du Congo à l'île de Zanzibar [. . .] Ujiji! Ville arabe par l'influence, ville africaine par nature. Singulier mélange d'une civilisation factice et d'une sauvagerie qui la vaut et même lui est préférable".

Henry M. Stanley in Ujiji, including the winged words uttered by the latter. Travellagues – discussed selectively in the previous subchapter in order to distil representations of Ujiji – were immensely popular. The adventurous, dangerous, threatening, inhospitable, unknown, and exotic characteristics of the depicted travels were an essential part of the success of these accounts. Besides the expectations of travellers mentioned earlier, the readers' expectations, too, were to be met. Descriptions of places, therefore, were perhaps even more inspired by the genre than by the intrinsic qualities of these places. In this context, Ujiji was one of these places that symbolically took the meaning of the end of the world, much like the “heart of darkness” in Joseph Conrad’s novel⁵³ or in Francis Ford Coppola’s movie *Apocalypse Now*,⁵⁴ which, despite being set in Vietnam, is based on Conrad’s Congo novel. The main difference between places like the heart of darkness and places like Ujiji is the real-life existence of the latter. Ujiji is real and symbolic at the same time: it really was one of the largest urban settlements in the African interior by the end of the nineteenth century; it really was an important market town where salt, fish, ivory, cloth, and enslaved people were traded; and it really was the place where Livingstone, as well as Speke and Burton before him and a number of others after him, stayed for a while. But at the same time, it was imagined both spatially and morally as so far away from civilization that this symbolic meaning and role of the town overshadowed or, at least, reshaped its reality.

In this respect, it is significant that the two people having agency in the story of Stanley meeting Livingstone are these two white men. While a handful of Arab bystanders do passively appear in some images or descriptions (Figure 2, left-hand side), the bulk of the local population seems to exist only in so far as missionaries liberate them – from slavery or from oblivion?

The depiction of a place regardless of its reality and its people can also be seen in *The African Queen*, the 1935 novel by C.S. Forester,⁵⁵ or the 1951 film starring Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn (Figure 2, right-hand side).⁵⁶ A white boatman and a white missionary face a threatening wilderness devoid of people, life, or reality. They confront vaguely personified evil enemies, albeit Germans instead of “Arabs” in this case. Set in some unidentified part of Africa during the First World War, the two white people, who dislike each other at first and marry in the end, try to alter the course of the war by scuttling a massive German

⁵³ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007 [1899]).

⁵⁴ Francis F. Coppola (dir.), *Apocalypse Now* [movie], 1979. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0078788/> (accessed 30 September 2024).

⁵⁵ C.S. Forester, *The African Queen* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1935).

⁵⁶ John Huston (dir.), *The African Queen* [movie], 1951. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0043265/> (accessed 30 September 2024).

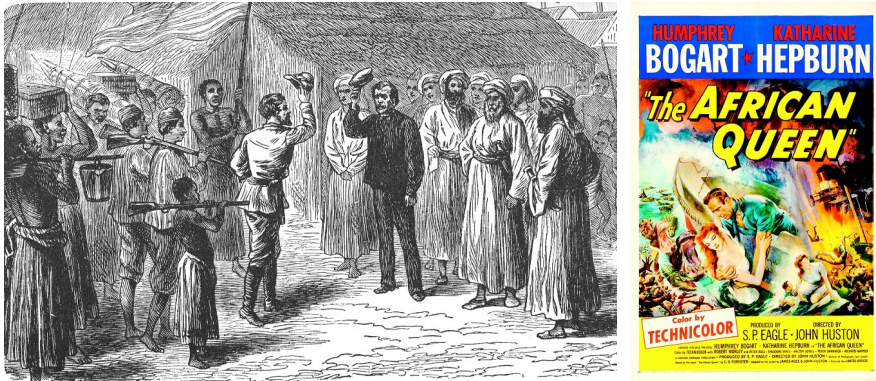


Figure 2: “Dr. Livingstone, I presume”: H.M. Stanley meeting Dr. Livingstone in Ujiji (1871), and “The African Queen”, US theatrical release poster (1951).⁵⁷

warship that dominates the nearby lake. The ludicrous idea to head for the lake and sink the huge German gunboat *Königin Luise* is loosely based on the true story of the German steamer *Götzen*, which was scuttled by German engineers in the Bay of Kigoma in 1916.

Neither Kigoma nor the *Götzen* are identified in this film, but, then again, there is no need for ‘real’ knowledge. The setting has to substantiate the feeling of being at the very heart of the end of the world, the middle of nowhere surrounded by menacing nature, devoid of an actual place or people. The vessel and the war are disconnected from the historical context of the Kigoma-based gunboat on Lake Tanganyika. The population is completely absent from the movie. Admittedly, the novel and movie are romantic fiction and nobody has ever pretended otherwise. However, the colonial mindset that allowed a scenario to be set in a non-place and enacted by outsiders reveals a degree of neglect that characterizes the ambivalent history of Kigoma. The Oscar-winning Hollywood movie pays partial attention to Kigoma-Ujiji or, at least, to the events that took place there, while at the same time ignoring the town in its own right and rendering it invisible.

In his 1970 film *Appunti per un’Orestiade Africana*,⁵⁸ the film director Pier Paolo Pasolini did at least put some effort into coming to grips with Kigoma but

⁵⁷ Free of copyright: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Henry_Morton_Stanley#/media/File:Rencontre_de_Livingstone_-_How_I_found_Livingstone_\(fr\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Henry_Morton_Stanley#/media/File:Rencontre_de_Livingstone_-_How_I_found_Livingstone_(fr).png), and https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/81/The_African_Queen_%281952_US_poster%29.jpg (accessed 30 September 2024).

⁵⁸ Special thanks to Konstantinos Katsakioris for drawing my attention to this film and its references to Kigoma.

only as scenery for a projected movie, which in the end he never produced. *Appunti* is a film about the preparations for making a film. He travels through Tanzania and Uganda in search of suitable cast and scenery, integrates footage about the Biafran War, experiments with African-American jazz musicians to sing in the film, and gathers feedback from African students in Rome – who are not at all convinced by Pasolini's concept. What Pasolini had in mind was to situate Aeschylus' ancient Greek trilogy *Oresteia* in Africa as an allegory for an alleged transformation from primitive to modern, as a metaphor of development and democratization. In a nutshell, the *Oresteia* tells the story of the assassination of Agamemnon by his wife Clytemnestra upon his return to Argos after having won the Trojan War, followed by the revenge killing of Clytemnestra by their son Orestes, after which the Furies hunt down the latter. The plot takes place in a context of retaliation, where the gods determine what ought to happen. When Orestes finally arrives in Athens, the goddess Athena diverts from the path of retaliation and instead brings Orestes and the Furies before a tribunal based on moral responsibility and a fair trial. Pasolini believed that "Africa" was on a similar path in the first decade after political independence and wanted to illustrate this by contrasting a primitive and a modern Africa with each other. Thereby, he reproduced virtually every stereotype about Africa one can imagine. He combined scenes from East Africa, footage of war in West Africa, African American musicians, and African students in Europe in order to depict "Africa" as a unit. He assembled scenes of poverty and cruelty represented by people who can be seen talking but whose voice is not heard.⁵⁹ He contrasted these scenes with images of modernity expressed more by objects than by people. Modern buildings and car traffic in towns like Kampala and Dar es Salaam along with African students in Rome and African American musicians represent modernity. People in "the centre of Africa" stand for an Africa "still close to prehistory" but "the houses are recently built", as he comments in a voice-over. Projecting his own view of a developing "Africa" on the scenes that he encounters, he interprets recent buildings as expressions of the evolution towards modernity. That is where Kigoma comes in.

After about 10 minutes into the film, with a score of a Soviet workers' song, Pasolini travels by ship, departing on Lake Victoria and, using the magic of filmmaking, arriving in Kigoma, which he calls "the centre of Africa" (Figure 3, left-hand side).⁶⁰ Given that at this point in the film, he is still primarily depicting a

59 Tom Hawkins, "Orestes on Trial in Africa: Pasolini's *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* and Sissako's *Bamako*" in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aeschylus*, (ed.) Rebecca Futo Kennedy (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 458 n8.

60 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana* [movie], 1970. The fragment begins after 9 minutes 48 seconds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjcx8Mhtoxc&feature=youtu>.



Figure 3: Stills from P.P. Pasolini's *Appunti per un'Orestide Africana* (1970).

primitive “Africa” “still close to prehistory”, this designation of it as the centre of Africa is evocative more of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* than the core of modernization. Yet, it is also here that modern houses, bicycles, and a motor vessel appear. Half a minute later, he again calls Kigoma the centre of Africa.

Notwithstanding, 40 minutes later, Pasolini returns to Kigoma, when he is allegorically depicting Athens, the modern city. An African man symbolizing Orestes walks through Kigoma, with the railway station in the background (Figure 3, right-hand side), when Pasolini spells out that “the new city is represented by material collected in Kampala, Dar es Salaam, and Kigoma”.⁶¹ In the whole film, Kigoma is the only place depicting both Argos and Athens, the only place that is called “the centre of Africa” in both the primitive and the modern sense. Obviously, I agree with the scepticism of the African students in Rome, who repudiated the projection of the Oresteia on a lumped together “Africa” rising from prehistory to modernity. Yet, while mirroring his own view on a global “Africa” in transformation, it is striking that of all places Kigoma stands out as ambivalent, as both “close to prehistory” and on its way to modernity, or, in the terminology of this book, as a liminal town and a transformative space.

There are further examples of Kigoma-Ujiji continuing to stimulate the imagination into the twenty-first century. For instance, in the 2004 Giles Foden novel *Mimi*

be&t=588 (accessed 30 September 2024). The left-hand picture is a still, taken when the quoted reference to “the centre of Africa” is made.

⁶¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Appunti per un'Orestide Africana* [movie], 1970. The fragment begins after 51 minutes 57 seconds: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjcx8Mhtoxc&feature=youtu.be&t=3117> (accessed 30 September 2024). The right-hand picture is a still, taken when the fragment begins.

and *Toutou go Forth*⁶² and the 2007 Alex Capus novel *Eine Frage der Zeit*,⁶³ both of which are about the Götzen during the First World War, in the 2014 Hermann Schulz novel *Die Nacht von Dar es Salaam*, which largely deals with missionary experiences in Kigoma-Ujiji during the interwar period,⁶⁴ or in the 2012 Flemish television format *Dr. Livingstone*,⁶⁵ in which two travellers cross the African continent to finally meet in Ujiji. Kigoma-Ujiji has contributed to Western popular culture largely regardless of its reality and more often than not harking back to either Stanley finding Livingstone or the Götzen during the First World War.

The fascination with the century-old vessel, now called the Liemba, manifests itself in Kigoma as well, not merely as a transportation infrastructure but also as heritage, as tourist attraction, and possibly as an event location. The Friends of Liemba Foundation was established in 2009 and has partners in Germany (Run Liemba e.V.) that are likewise committed to the preservation of this colonial heritage.⁶⁶ Similarly, the inclusion of The Central Slave and Ivory Trade Route from Bagamoyo to Ujiji on the tentative list for UNESCO World Heritage together with the renovation of the Livingstone Museum in Ujiji bring the fascinations of outsiders into the town itself.⁶⁷ Outside perceptions and representations, therefore, cannot be fully dissociated from real life in Kigoma-Ujiji.

I can add a final instance of perception by seemingly close outsiders: patterns of prejudice, whose origins can be traced back to what we have seen in the first part of this chapter, provide a breeding ground for rumours of witchcraft and magic, assumed to be very powerful in Ujiji, in particular among its inhabitants of Congolese descent. This reputation reaches across the country. When I was doing archival research in Dar es Salaam and told people that I was preparing a book about the history of Kigoma-Ujiji, my interlocutors hinted several times at the strong magic or spiritual forces in Ujiji. On a weekend trip to Bagamoyo, a town on the coast historically connected to Ujiji, a museum guide, too, warned me about the magical force of Ujiji. When in Kigoma and Ujiji, Christians in particular talked about the strength of Muslim magic. When I began to present my then on-

62 Giles Foden, *Mimi and Toutou Go Forth: The Bizarre Battle for Lake Tanganyika* (London: Penguin, 2004).

63 Alex Capus, *Eine Frage der Zeit* (München: btb, 2007).

64 Hermann Schulz, *Die Nacht von Dar es Salaam* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2014). I am grateful to Adam Jones and Kristin Jäger for drawing my attention to this publication.

65 Woestijnvis, *Dr. Livingstone* [TV Series], 2012. See: <https://www.woestijnvis.be/producties/dr-livingstone> (accessed 30 September 2024).

66 Interview KU36, Kigoma, 20 July 2012. Also see: “Von Goetzen bis Liemba”, <https://liemba.wordpress.com/> (accessed 30 September 2024).

67 “The Central Slave and Ivory Trade Route”, UNESCO World Heritage – tentative lists, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/2095/> (accessed 30 September 2024).

going research at conferences and colloquia, people from the Kigoma region who happened to be in the audience time and again referred to this magical force or asked why I had not mentioned it. You can hear stories about Ujiji witchcraft from inhabitants of Kigoma as well as from people in Mwanza on Lake Victoria, Dar es Salaam on the Indian Ocean, or Berlin along the River Spree. Thus, a force to be reckoned with is ascribed to this both marginal and magical place and its people, yet at the same time, there is a subtext of weakness and marginality conveyed as well, implying that spirituality and magic is their only force.⁶⁸

The question arising from all of these images of Kigoma-Ujiji as marginal, as magical, as the beginning of the end of the world, as unduly neglected, as in need of reappraisal, or as the starting point for modernization is not whether or not these representations are accurate. The point is that the images exist even all the way down to the inhabitants of Kigoma-Ujiji themselves. These images share a positioning of the place beyond the common or the familiar, as both marginal and transformative, in short, as a liminal town.

2.3 Visiting and Representing Kigoma-Ujiji Today

In this chapter, I have thus far discussed outside perspectives on Kigoma-Ujiji from the mid-1850s until the 2010s. My own perception of Kigoma-Ujiji, too, came to fruition in the 2010s and is undeniably an outside view. Despite its relevant differences, it also has some similarities with nineteenth-century travellers' accounts. When I first travelled to Kigoma-Ujiji, I had preconceived expectations and scientific motivations, not unlike my predecessors a century and a half before. I travelled across East Africa, following more or less the same trajectory as the nineteenth-century central caravan route, although it took me several days by train instead of several months by caravan. When we reached the rim from where Lake Tanganyika could be sighted, my travel companion in the train compartment drew my attention to the marvellous view. For most of our journey, we either talked, slept or read. My companion, a clerk at the Congolese Consulate in Kigoma, had been reading the Bible, while I was absorbed by John Iliffe's *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. He was convinced – and tried to convince me – that I was wasting my time on these profane writings. When we finally arrived at the Kigoma railway station on a Sunday in August 2011, he took me to a hotel and invited me to his place for dinner that evening. The next day, a Burundian refu-

⁶⁸ For an ethnohistorical analysis of, amongst others, spirituality in Kigoma-Ujiji, see McCurdy, "Transforming associations".

gee, who had earned his PhD in biology from my alma mater, introduced me to my research assistant, a Congolese refugee from the Kasai.

In short, I was introduced to Kigoma by two Congolese and one Burundian, by two refugees and an employee in the consular service, by three Christians also, one of whom was a quite ardent pentecostalist. With hindsight, I can say that I was thrown into the town with a few relevant building blocks for the history of Kigoma-Ujiji (the Congolese and Burundian element, refugees, religion), but I was not dropped into the heart of the urban community, to say the least. Of course, I did not stay confined to this circle for the rest of my stay; but can I really claim that my entrance was fundamentally different from arriving in nineteenth-century Ujiji and being encapsulated in the Arab-Swahili caravan complex? Perhaps what I did is even more consequential, because I was there because of the town and not to find sources of rivers, contours of lakes or locations for mission stations. I should rephrase that: I was there because I wanted to write a global history of the town. I doubt that the people living there were aching for a global history of their town. In order to write this history, I now draw on a couple of months in Kigoma-Ujiji, complemented with archival research and reading through the relevant historiography. This brings me closer to Burton than to Hore, when it comes to time spent in the area. Do not get me wrong, I believe that I did my job as a historian of African, global, and urban history in an appropriate way, and it would please me if I can also convince the reader. I did my best to get a feeling for different parts of town, to listen to all sorts of people, and to put my expectations to the test, and in the end, I almost completely abandoned my initial hypotheses regarding leisure and subaltern politics. Yet, one thing is sure: mine is as much an outsider perspective as the ones discussed so far.