

3 Urbanization on the Move: From Caravan Trade to Urbanity

In this chapter, I trace the urban origins of Kigoma-Ujiji. Whereas I have looked for information about the ‘place’ where the town of Ujiji emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century in the previous chapter, in this chapter, I take the ‘space’ of urbanization as the starting point. I argue that urbanization took place within the caravan trade complex and occurred on the move before it sedimented in a few particular places – places that, for sure, were already integrated in the caravan trade complex as markets or provisioning stations before they became urban(e). In the Sahel context, it has already been pointed out that in order to understand trade patterns and frontiers it is worthwhile considering “mobile space” or to recognize that in some instances “mobility and movement were prior to place”.¹ I take this insight one step further by applying it to the process of urbanization, understood as the development of an urban culture or the appropriation of urbanity.

The short-cut for this interpretation would be that the coastal or Swahili culture is an urban culture, one appropriated by certain groups within the caravan trade complex, and when they settled permanently in places like Ujiji these places became urban as well. Phrased like this, my argument would be quite conservative. The Swahili culture on the Indian Ocean coast has been characterized as urban, urbane, and mercantile ever since scholars started to pay attention to it.² The porters, guides, and aides in the trade caravans across East Africa have been

1 Denis Retailé and Olivier Walther, “Spaces of uncertainty: A model of mobile space in the Sahel”, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 32, no. 1 (2011): 85–101; Olivier J. Walther, Allen M. Howard and Denis Retailé, “West African Spatial Patterns of Economic Activities: Combining the ‘Spatial Factor’ and ‘Mobile Space’ Approaches”, *African Studies* 74, no. 3 (2015): 346–365; Judith Scheele, “Garage or Caravanserail: Saharan Connectivity in Al-Khalil, Northern Mali” in *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*, (eds.) James McDougall and Judith Scheele (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 233. I thank Philip Gooding for drawing my attention to the work on frontiers, space and mobility in the Sahel.

2 Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, *The Swahili: Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society, 800–1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 80–98; Middleton, *The World of the Swahili*, 54–82; James De Vere Allen, *Swahili Origins: Swahili Culture & the Shungwaya Phenomenon* (Oxford: James Currey, 1993); Thomas Spear, “Early Swahili History Reconsidered”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, no. 2 (2000): 257–290; Stephanie Wynne-Jones and Jeffrey Fleisher, “Swahili Urban Spaces of the Eastern African Coast” in *Making Ancient Cities: Space and Place in Early Urban Societies*, (eds.) Andrew T. Creekmore III and Kevin D. Fisher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 111–144.

recognized as “Carriers of Culture”³ and Ujiji has already been analysed as a Swahili town.⁴ However, the point I want to make is not that caravans transported an urbane culture from the shores of the Indian Ocean to the shores of Lake Tanganyika thus prompting the birth of a town. I maintain that the urbanization process took place on the move, not merely by transferring, adopting or slightly adapting a coastal culture but by developing an urbane identity motivated by the dynamics in East Central Africa and within the caravan trade complex itself, by which I not only refer to the travelling caravans, but to the entire apparatus – provisioning stations, market places, skilled labour, political orders, etc. – that facilitated the caravan trade. Certainly, the coastal Swahili culture played a role as a reference, ideal, or inspiration, and was not invented or created within the East Central African caravan trade complex. Of course, people were fully aware that they were adopting an urbane culture from the Indian Ocean coast, a culture connected to a wider world, but this coastal culture was neither the starting point nor the driving force of the urbanization process in East Central Africa.

Likewise, the dynamics in Ujiji were not the starting point for the urbanization of the place, either. Local power relations and residential patterns indeed played a role in the unfolding of the process. But in order to understand the urbanization process we have to look at the caravan trade complex and, above all, to look west rather than east of Lake Tanganyika. For a variety of reasons, existing research on East Africa has often stopped at the lake,⁵ whereas the people responsible for the urbanization process crossed it. The few people who have dealt with the area around Lake Tanganyika in the nineteenth century inevitably take both sides of the lake into consideration,⁶ although they either stay in the direct perimeter of the lake or are not concerned with urbanization much. The single exception is Philip Gooding. Although his focus is on the integration of the Lake Tanganyika region and like me he has not done any original research on the Manyema region in East Congo per se, he productively uses information about Manyema in his interpretation of power relations, competition, and conflict in Ujiji.⁷ Most of the material I use in this chapter has also been used by Gooding. Of

3 Rockel, *Carriers of Culture*.

4 Hino, “Social Stratification”.

5 Geert Castryck, Achim von Oppen and Katharina Zöller, “Introduction: Bridging Histories of East and Central Africa,” *History in Africa* 46 (2019): 217–229.

6 Brown, “Ujiji”; Norman R. Bennett, *Arab Versus European: Diplomacy and War in Nineteenth-Century East Central Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1986); McCurdy, “Transforming Associations”; Gooding, *On the Frontiers*; McDow, *Buying Time*; Katharina Zöller, “Crossing Multiple Borders: ‘The Manyema’ in Colonial East Central Africa”, *History in Africa* 46 (2019): 299–326.

7 Especially Gooding, *On the Frontiers*, 130–135.

course, there are only so many source materials available, but still, it would have been hard to write this chapter without being able to build on Gooding's work. Nevertheless, I come to a slightly different conclusion than he does. He argues that Ujiji was only "proto-urban" by lack of an "urban culture" in the late nineteenth century,⁸ whereas in the following I develop the argument that the urban culture was already present in the caravan trade complex and sedimented in the town of Ujiji before the turn of the century. The urbanization process happened on the move as much as on the spot, translocally rather than just locally.⁹

As urbanization took place in the caravan trade complex, Ujiji is not the only town that emerged out of the process. In this chapter, I combine three vantage points: what happened in the caravan trade complex; how does this relate to coastal Swahili culture; and how did the settlement of urban culture work out in Ujiji, the first urbanized quarter of the present-day urban area of Kigoma-Ujiji? The overall interpretation is translocal. It combines characteristics in specific locations with global processes of increasing interconnectedness: long-distance movements across East and Central Africa intertwined with mobilities in the region, opportunities and crises caused by caravan trade and colonization, as well as the production of an East-Central-African Swahili urbanity, which became residential in a few localities of which Ujiji became one of the most important, if not the most important, by the turn of the century. I argue that the scattered urbanization and Swahilization in East Central Africa can only be understood by looking at the challenges faced by people in a region in disorder, at the local motivations of these people for adopting and adapting Swahili ways of life, and at the trans-local urban citizenship they thus produced.

3.1 The Caravan Trade in East and Central Africa

The development of new towns in the region was a corollary of the thriving caravan trade complex that connected mainland East and Central Africa with the Indian Ocean coast and world. However, there is no direct or automatic causality between the caravan trade and the emergence of Swahili towns. Areas in the immediate hinterland of the Indian Ocean coast had been connected to the coast for centuries, without these connections leading to the emergence of Swahili towns beyond the coast.¹⁰ Further inland the chain of exchange remained indirect until

⁸ Gooding, "Lake Tanganyika", Chapter 6, especially 224 and 232.

⁹ For the use of "translocality", I draw on Freitag and von Oppen (see Chapter 1).

¹⁰ For a thorough analysis of coast-hinterland relations, see Willis, *Mombasa and Felicitas Becker, *Becoming Muslim in Mainland Tanzania, 1890–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,*

the beginning of the nineteenth century, when caravans instituted direct connections between mainland East and Central Africa on the one hand and the Indian Ocean coast and world on the other. Nyamwezi and Yao traders were at least as important for these commercial connections as the traders from the coast. The first Nyamwezi caravans reached the coast around 1800; and only a quarter of a century later, the first traders from the coast settled in the main Nyamwezi marketplaces, especially in Tabora. At this point in time, the coastal traders had not yet reached further than Tabora on the African continent, although they already had connections across the Indian Ocean for centuries. At the same time, the Nyamwezi caravans travelled as far west, north, and south as they travelled east, collecting and distributing ivory, copper, wax, textiles, salt, and enslaved people in different directions. It took until the 1840s for coastal traders to settle on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, an area which had already been frequented by Nyamwezi traders for quite some time by then. The Nyamwezi would remain crucial in the caravan trade throughout the nineteenth century, although coastal traders gradually took over control.¹¹

The most important trading area on the shores of Lake Tanganyika was Ujiji, back then not yet a town, but the land of the Jiji people. Both place and people help explain why this location became the main commercial hub on the eastern lake shore. As the lake is part of the Great Rift Valley, cut deep amidst surrounding mountain ranges, only a few places provide comfortable access to the lake. As mentioned before, Ujiji had a few beaches descending smoothly into the, for the most part, very steep and deep lake, allowing the boats used for navigation on the lake to be pulled on the shore or pushed into the water. As part of the larger Ha and overarching Great Lakes peoples, the Jiji people were primarily oriented towards agricultural and livestock farming.¹² However, thanks to the easy access to the lake, navigation and lacustrine trade became a significant Jiji specialization.¹³ A further spatial coincidence contributed to the appeal of Ujiji as a strategic place for long-distance trade in the Lake Tanganyika area: it was the closest access point to the lake for salt from the hugely important Uvinza saltpans – or the other way around, it was the closest access point to the vital commodity of salt

2008). However, in both cases, the relations remain relatively close to the coast and the focus is on the colonial period and not on the centuries before.

¹¹ See Rockel, *Carriers of Culture*; Andreas Greiner, *Human Portage and Colonial State Formation in German East Africa, 1880s–1914: Tensions of Transport* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

¹² For a compelling argumentation making a case for a Great Lakes commonality, see Chrétien, *L'Afrique des grands lacs*.

¹³ Gooding, *On the Frontiers*, Chapter 4.

for people living around the lake.¹⁴ This combination of features made Ujiji, the land of the Jiji people, a strategic commercial hub for the caravan trade complex.

By and large it was the Nyamwezi caravans that took care of overland trade east of the lake, whereas Jiji expeditions were in charge of trade across the lake. Initially only the junior partners in the caravan trade complex, the coastal caravan traders became competitors over time and gradually took control over a complex that reached between the Indian Ocean coast and the area west of Lake Tanganyika, in the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. By mid-century, coastal traders reached as far as the Lualaba River, a tributary of the Congo Stream in an area (back then) rich in ivory – i.e. in elephants. As ivory had become the main export product from the region to the world market, increasingly complemented with slave trading within the region, the focus of the long-distance caravan trade shifted to the lands west of Lake Tanganyika. Manyema, an area in the east of present-day Congo, became the final destination of the central caravan route and the area of origin of many future urbanites along that route. Thus, while characteristics of the Jiji land and people help explain the location of the future town, urbanization unfolded elsewhere and the carriers of the emerging urban(e) culture mainly originated from the lands west of the lake.

However, the expansion of the caravan trade complex to the Manyema region, which is at the same time part of a process of incorporation into a global capitalist market,¹⁵ does not suffice to explain the emergence of urban centres along the caravan routes. The disruption of political orders, the widespread occurrence of violence and the concomitant migration of refugees, the spread of diseases, enslavement of kinds, as well as the creation of new political orders, the availability of professional opportunities and fashionable consumption goods for young people, and changing tides in local rivalries are at least as important to understand urbanization along the caravan routes.

3.2 Disorder and New Order in East Central Africa

A telling figure illustrating the process of disruption and opportunity is Hamed bin Mohamed al-Murjebi, better known as Tippu Tip, whom we have already met in the previous chapter. Drawing on superior weaponry, divide and rule strategies, as well as kinship claims not only building on his Omani pedigree but also

¹⁴ See Jean-Pierre Chrétien, “Le Commerce du sel”; Wagner, “Trade and Commercial Attitudes”.

¹⁵ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*; David Northrup, *Beyond the Bend in the River: African Labor in Eastern Zaire, 1865–1940* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1988).

referring to his – alleged or actual – grandmother Daramumba from Utetela (in present-day Congo), Tippu Tip not only traded but, by the 1880s, he militarily and politically dominated the area west of Lake Tanganyika.¹⁶ It was in this realm that the process of urbanization, of becoming urbane, that eventually led to an urban Ujiji, unfolded. This is quite paradoxical, as the record depicts chaos and violence in the area: seemingly the complete opposite of civilized behaviour and of urbanity. However, it was against the background of disorder that a new order became appealing.

By the 1860s at the latest, the caravan trade complex encroached upon the ivory-rich Manyema area, around the Lualaba River. Much like Bagamoyo, Tabora, and Ujiji further in the east, Nyangwe became the most important commercial centre in Manyema. But a marketplace and provisioning station do not yet make an urban centre. The population fluctuated on the rhythm of arriving and departing caravans, which in turn depended on the availability of ivory. Although moving caravans were of paramount significance for the trade system, fixed places were also pivotal for the functioning of the system. The storage of collected trade goods was localized. The teams in charge of collecting goods were gathered in and sent from the same localities. Commodities, too, were brought to these localities. Composing of the caravans to ship the collected goods to the world market happened in these places. Plantations were needed for provisioning the caravans as well as the numerous people responsible for all the other tasks emanating from these localities. Nyangwe was such a locality, as were Ujiji and Tabora; and Tippu Tip operated from Kasongo, a town nearby Nyangwe, because he felt the need to distance himself from the coastal traders who had gathered in Nyangwe. Either way, the caravan trade complex relied on a decisive static component, staying put in particular places that buttressed the complex and provided its infrastructure. While intrinsically mobile, the caravan trade complex thus also depended on locations which were the hotspots where urbanization would – literally – take place.

Apart from rivalries amongst coastal traders, which is central to Gooding's interpretation and to which I return later, the system of ivory harvesting – a euphemism for elephant hunting – depended upon mobilizing local people to bring ivory to the caravan traders. Direct coercion was one way to achieve this goal; alliances and commerce an even better one. And these allies could, in turn, also use coercion. Tippu Tip was a master in playing this game of alliances. There is no doubt that violence predominated in the rivalries amongst coastal traders, in the processes of building alliances as well as in the coercion deployed by coastal

16 McDow, *Buying Time*; Bontinck, *L'autobiographie*, 89.

traders and their allies. In his autobiography, Tippu Tip talks at length about his many fights. Yet, *within* the caravan trade complex there were opportunities to escape disorder and achieve social status. That was where the nucleus of an urban culture developed, which would later sediment in places like Nyangwe, Kasongo, and Ujiji. The driving force behind the urbanization process lies in the disruption, on the one hand, and the people from Manyema trying to find a way out of disorder, on the other. The new order of Tippu Tip and his allies, which is part of the caravan trade complex, is the context where “The Manyema Hordes of Tippu Tip”, as Melvin Page called them, found this way out.¹⁷ It would lead to a “Swahili” urban culture, but this process of Swahilization and urbanization was an East Central African one and not a mere diffusion of a Swahili culture from more than 1,300 kilometres away on the Indian Ocean coast.

Before I turn to the urbanization of Ujiji in the final section of this chapter, I will first explain the urbanization process within the East Central African caravan trade complex from four perspectives: “European” (source-criticism), global, regional, and *ngwana*.

3.2.1 A European Perspective, or Some Thoughts on Source Criticism

The available sources help explain why the mobile caravans and the situated towns are insufficiently considered together when it comes to the people living in them. What we know about the urbanizing nucleus within the caravan trade complex, usually referred to as *waungwana*, is mainly based on travelogues, diaries, and memoirs recorded by Europeans who went to East and Central Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century. Despite the “imperial eyes” (see Chapter 2), the information in these sources is relatively detailed when it comes to the caravans. There is a perfectly logical explanation for this. These Europeans used the “infrastructure” of caravans as their means of transportation. All of them spent months walking across the continent, which gave them ample time to closely observe – and describe – these caravans. On the contrary, their descriptions of towns, which they merely crossed along the way, were usually based on shorter stays and superficial observations.

There were a few exceptions, like Edward Coode Hore of the London Missionary Society, who spent quite some time in Ujiji between 1878 and 1888, or Jérôme

17 After Melvin E. Page, “The Manyema Hordes of Tippu Tip: A Case Study in Social Stratification and the Slave Trade in Eastern Africa”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1974): 69–84.

Becker, whose sojourn in Tabora led to more sensitive descriptions of town life.¹⁸ But for the most part, European depictions of East and Central Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century give us more detailed information about the caravans than about the towns. Even what we know about the towns is often seen from a caravan perspective, such as provisioning on markets or the networks of those who organize the caravans. The commercial interconnectedness between marketplaces and caravan trade is apparent, for sure, but the connectedness of town and caravan life, of people, and of culture is highlighted far less often.

This leads to a decisive bias in the descriptions of town life: whereas the Europeans (and the caravans) are highly mobile, the towns are depicted as static – albeit vibrant – spaces through which the mobile caravans pass. The mobility that is inherent to European travelling and caravan trade is largely blended out when it comes to towns. Obviously, this tells us more about the experience of the European travellers – whether as part of geographical, missionary, or military expeditions – than about the reality of booming towns. However, as the caravan *waungwana* and the urban Swahili are in fact intertwined, if not identical, we indirectly learn more about town life from the description of caravan life than the actual snapshots in town make us believe.

Two further biases in European writings on nineteenth-century East and Central Africa distort our understanding of caravan and urban culture. I have mentioned the obsession with slavery and the slave trade before. Added to this obsession was a proximity to the leadership of the caravan trade complex, which was mostly of coastal – Omani or Mrima¹⁹ – origin, which also limited the awareness of the Central African masses in the complex. This bias was partly social, as European travellers often dealt with the top layer of society. But it also had to do with the travellers' own trajectory, which started from the East African coast and built on the received knowledge gathered on and near the coast. Their perspective mostly started from the eastern leg of the caravan trade complex – between the Indian Ocean and Lake Tanganyika – which made them less perceptive of a Central African Swahili urbanity emerging west of the lake.

The caravan bias and coastal perspective of nineteenth-century sources also left traces in academic literature. Although several authors have written about

¹⁸ Hore, *Tanganyika*; Edward C. Hore, "On the Twelve Tribes of Tanganyika", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 12 (1883): 2–21; Jérôme Becker, *La vie en Afrique, ou, Trois ans dans l'Afrique centrale* (Paris, Bruxelles: J. Lebègue, 1887).

¹⁹ Mrima is the part of the East African Indian Ocean coast facing the isles of Zanzibar. The Omani traders operated from Zanzibar, via Bagamoyo, whereas most Mrima merchants in Central Africa were from Pangani and Tanga.

the caravan culture before me, they usually do not relate the culture of the caravan trade complex to the emerging urbanity in the region, which was part and parcel of this complex.²⁰ In most scholarly research on the caravan trade complex, towns along the caravan route are taken for granted or reduced to their role as a market, sometimes denied an urban character altogether, or at best, assessed as a dynamic factor influencing the caravan trade complex, but rarely investigated in their own right. In contrast, historians describing towns in the area do refer to the importance of the caravans but treat them as phenomena moving through town, having a tremendous impact on town life, but not as existentially merged into this life.²¹ Or to put it another way, previous research does acknowledge how the caravan trade constituted the towns where it moved through, but nevertheless separates the caravans as mobile transportation infrastructure from the towns as set places. I suggest thinking towns and caravans together as part of a caravan trade complex of which both were part as one space in which urbanization on the move materialized.

3.2.2 A Global Perspective

The caravan trade was, of course, the driving force behind the complex. Its expansion is closely related to the supply-and-demand on the world market, particularly the demand for ivory, the demand for spices, which in turn led to an upsurge in plantation labour – and the slave trade –, and the supply of industrially produced textiles (and beads) used as trade goods or currency in the caravan trade. The fact that African consumers in turn influenced and even imposed textile fashions, as Jeremy Presthold demonstrates,²² illustrates the two-sided character of the globalization process. Basically, globalization led to enlarged scales of operation as well as to the spread of consumer goods and the introduction and increase in the number of firearms,²³ which undermined political and moral or-

20 Page, “The Manyema Hordes”; Philip Gooding, “Slavery, ‘respectability,’ and being ‘freeborn’ on the shores of nineteenth-century Lake Tanganyika”, *Slavery & Abolition* 40, no. 1 (2019): 147–167; Rockel, *Carriers of Culture*; Deutsch, *Emancipation without Abolition*; Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*.

21 Brown, “Ujiji”; Pallaver, *Un’ Altra Zanzibar*; Karin Pallaver, “A triangle: Spatial processes of urbanization and political power in 19th-century Tabora, Tanzania”, *AFRIQUES* 11 (2020): 1–32.

22 Presthold, *Domesticating the world*; also see Sheryl McCurdy, “Fashioning Sexuality: Desire, Manyema Ethnicity, and the Creation of the ‘Kanga,’ ‘ca.’ 1880–1900”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006): 441–469.

23 See Giacomo Macola, *The Gun in Central Africa: A History of Technology and Politics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016); Page, “The Manyema Hordes”.

ders.²⁴ One could also interpret the spread of the universal religions Islam and Christianity as compatible with the enlargement of scale and complementing cosmologies that no longer managed to encapsulate and give meaning to the abrupt and rapid changes that took place. In the process, some vested powers lost, some won. But throughout the region, masses were compelled to reorient.

No matter what the scenario was, the larger scale of operation as well as the disruption of order led to substantial dislocations of people. Some were captured and enslaved or negotiated into slavery as part of some truce, cooperation agreement, or submission pact.²⁵ Some made use of a shaky political order to escape inhibiting age hierarchies and followed the allure of opportunities for youngsters in the caravan complex.²⁶ Some were outright refugees running away from violence and devastation or left alone as orphans or outcasts.²⁷ Whatever their background, these dislocated people had in common their disconnection from the social, cultural, and political contexts which had been their respective living environments and frames of reference. They either voluntarily left them behind or were snatched away from them, or these environments no longer existed altogether. Obviously, some nuclei of people from the same background could and did try to stick together and keep social and ritual practices alive,²⁸ but the familiar conditions for belonging and social protection were no longer available in their direct living environment. Be it as captives from caravan traders or their allies, as people who lost their livelihood, their family, or their frame of reference, or as individuals or gangs who were lured away by new opportunities, thousands and thousands of people from the region were incorporated into the caravan trade complex. For all of them, this became their new frame of reference, their new order, in which they developed strategies for survival, success, or social status. I return to this point in the section on the *ngwana* ideal.

24 Jelmer Vos and David Maxwell explain the undermining of political and moral orders for Kongo/Congo. Jelmer Vos, *Kongo in the age of empire, 1860–1913: The breakdown of a moral order* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2015); David Maxwell, “Remaking Boundaries of Belonging: Protestant Missionaries and African Christians in Katanga, Belgian Congo”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 52, no. 1 (2019): 59–80.

25 See Chapter 2 for European sources paying attention to only this part of the story.

26 Page, “The Manyema Hordes”; for the area east of Lake Tanganyika, see R.G. Abrahams, *The political organization of Unyamwezi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

27 Wissmann reports about emptied villages, which is the outcome of capturing, fleeing and killing. Hermann von Wissmann, “On the Influence of Arab Traders in West Central Africa”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 10, no. 8 (1888): 525–531.

28 E.g. McCurdy, “Transforming Associations”; McCurdy, “Fashioning Sexuality”.

In the nineteenth-century sources, obsessed as they were with the slave trade and abolition, this complex constellation of raiding, disorder, refuge, and opportunities has been lumped together under the heading of the “slave trade”. Part of it indeed was related to slave labour and the use of humans as trade goods, but this focus misses important parts of the story. Atrocities and killings did take place on a massive scale, but those left dead after razzias are obviously – or cynically – not the agents of urbanization we are interested in here. Surviving humans – often women and presumably still malleable children – were indeed captured into slavery. Many had to work in the fields to provision the caravans and the commercial centres. Yet, a considerable number of young men and women also joined the caravans, transporting goods in the direction of or from the coast, either attracted by the perceived opportunities or fleeing from the havoc endured in their place of origin, or both at the same time. They had not necessarily been captured into slavery, but their social situation and challenges were not fundamentally different. In both scenarios, the people involved moved far away from their area of origin. Disruption as a consequence of the encroaching impact of globalization, here in the form of incorporation in the capitalist world-market via the caravan trade complex and the enlarged scale of action, has more explanatory potential than slavery.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to adopt some of the insights the historiography of slavery has given. One point related to the dislocation and disconnection mentioned above is the “social death” of people captured into slavery.²⁹ Drawing upon this idea, Jan-Georg Deutsch argues that in Unyamwezi, “the moment slaves remained in a particular locality, they sought and acquired new social ties, which they hoped would ensure them more security”.³⁰ A second point is the phenomenon of runaway enslaved people or the founding of maroon communities, which Jonathon Glassman has studied near plantations on the Swahili coast.³¹ In the region under scrutiny in this chapter, there were far fewer coastal traders than in Unyamwezi, let alone than on the Swahili coast. This made them more dependent on people from the interior, which led to more, or more-rapidly-achieved, autonomy or freedom. At the same time, given the disruptions in the area, the “social death” affected a much larger group than those physically captured into slavery.

29 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982). Also see Gooding, “Slavery, ‘Respectability’”.

30 Jan-Georg Deutsch, “Notes on the Rise of Slavery & Social Change in Unyamwezi c. 1860–1900” in *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa*, (eds.) Henri Médard and Shane Doyle (London: James Currey, 2007), 91.

31 Jonathon Glassman, “The Bondsman’s New Clothes: The Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Resistance on the Swahili Coast”, *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 2 (1991): 277–312.

On top of that, while on the East African coast slavery was a much more variable category than the dominant image of chattel slavery as we know it from the Americas, further inland the distinction between slavery and non-slavery is even harder to make. Enslaved people's capacity to run away and the dependency on the caravan trade complex for people who were not enslaved, blurred this binary distinction and led to a much more gradual scale of gaining status, respectability, or prestige.³² Therefore, despite the overwhelming attention on slavery, the slave trade, and accompanying atrocities in the sources, it is not very useful to adopt slavery as the reading grid for the nineteenth-century history of urbanization along the caravan trade routes. What is useful here are the "social death", "the moment [of remaining] in a particular locality" and the "new social ties" or founding of a community. The transformation from "social death" to "new social ties" is a liminal phase par excellence and is at the heart of the urbanization process that eventually led to an urban Ujiji.

Yet, the new order that came out of this transformation process was overrun by a newer new order, which again disturbed the strategies of people who, for whatever reason, had become part of the caravan trade complex. After the arrival of the coastal caravan trade in the mid-nineteenth century, the advent of colonial conquest by the late 1880s to early 1890s constituted another critical juncture leading to disruption and opportunities for other – and, in some instances, the same – people than those in the caravan trade complex. Both the caravan trade and colonization are instances of increased global connectedness, but they clashed tremendously in East Central Africa. A process of disruption, which was already underway before colonization, reached existential levels with colonial conquest. More relevant than the imposition of colonial rule, which was only partially and onerously achieved over several decades, was the disruption in the region. For three decades, the historical record mentions devastated and deserted villages; the only difference is that, depending on the perspective, it is ascribed to slave traders, colonial conquest, sleeping sickness or forced labour in rubber harvesting.³³ One important effect of colonization, however, was that it aborted the caravan trade complex; that is, it first aborted the political order of the complex and, only several decades later, also technologically or infrastructurally replaced

32 Gooding, "Slavery, 'Respectability'". Also see Stephen J. Rockel, "Slavery and Freedom in Nineteenth Century East Africa: The Case of Waungwana Caravan Porters", *African Studies* 68, no. 1 (2009): 87–109.

33 Northrup, *Beyond the Bend*; Maryinez Lyons, *The colonial disease: a social history of sleeping sickness in northern Zaire, 1900–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Daniël Van-groenweghe, *Rood rubber: Leopold II en zijn Kongo* (Turnhout: Pelckmans 2004 [1985]).

the caravans with railways and motorized road traffic.³⁴ The first point, though, is more relevant in this context: colonization did not undo the urbanization process within the caravan trade complex, but it put a stop to it and chased many by-then urbanized people out of the newly instituted Congo Free State. This led to a concentration or regrouping of urbanized people on the move in a few places, of which Ujiji, just across the border, was the most important in this regard.

3.2.3 A Regional Perspective

Besides the large-scale processes, it is important to also differentiate between dynamics in the region in order to understand how urbanization on the move took place. When assessing the caravan trade complex going through Ujiji, it is necessary to distinguish between the complex east of Lake Tanganyika and how operations west of the lake were organized. The caravan trade complex between the Indian Ocean and Lakes Tanganyika and Victoria has been well researched. We are not only informed about the commercial and logistic organization and about the infrastructural connection of Bagamoyo, Pangani, and Tanga with Ujiji via Tabora but also about the balance of power between Nyamwezi and Swahili-Arab control over caravans, about control and conflict over the route, and about daily life, labour, gender, and ritual in the caravans.³⁵

But west of the lake, we are dealing with a different complex or, at least, an autonomous branch of the complex. As mentioned previously, when caravans reached Lake Tanganyika, Nyamwezi porters did not cross the lake; instead Jiji boatmen took care of the lacustrine transport. In the previous chapter, when Tippu Tip entrusted Hebeya with the task of securing a shipment from Zanzibar to Ujiji on behalf of Livingstone, we learned that Jiji traders were also active in long-distance commerce themselves. As such, the distinction between the stretch from ocean to lake and the area around and beyond the lake had characterized the caravan trade complex from the onset. However, in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s a genuine and autonomous kind of caravan trade complex developed in the area west of Lake Tanganyika. Tippu Tip was a crucial figure in this story, but the development had already started before he appeared on the scene.

Given the perspective of this book, it does not come as a surprise that I begin the story of an autonomous complex west of the lake in Ujiji. Part of the story also

³⁴ See Greiner, *Human Portage*, Ch. 6.

³⁵ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*; Rockel, *Carriers of Culture*; Deutsch, *Emancipation without Abolition*; McDow, *Buying Time*.

circumvented the lake rather than crossing it, but Ujiji was definitely a pivotal place for the projection of a leg of the caravan trade complex into Manyema, within which the process of urbanization on the move would develop. The first coastal traders to settle permanently in Ujiji came from Pangani on the Indian Ocean coast around 1845. We will learn more about them in the next subchapter and the next chapter, where the place Kigoma-Ujiji rather than the mobile space of urbanization are once again the frame of reference. Starting the interpretation of an urbanization process with permanent residence is, without doubt, highly conventional, but it will take a triple jump to go from our coastal traders in Ujiji to urbanity.

(1) Ujiji became a stepping stone towards an area abounding in elephants in the east of what would later become Congo. From mid-century onwards, a network of coastal traders established a logistical organization to collect ivory centred around Nyangwe, a town at the Lualaba River in Manyema. This system included, as mentioned before, the hunting of elephants, making trade deals with local leaders to deliver ivory, forcing people to do so, but also stockpiling trade goods, recruiting porters and guards for caravans, organizing rice plantation to provision caravans, and raiding and trading enslaved people to work on these plantations. When Livingstone wrote with contempt about “Ujijians”, shocked as he was after witnessing a massacre in the market of Nyangwe,³⁶ he probably meant the entourage of these coastal traders linked to the Pangani faction in Ujiji. It is remarkable that Tippu Tip, a notorious ivory and slave trader from the coast himself, also scorned the coastal traders and their pursuits in Nyangwe.³⁷ It seems to indicate that there was faction rivalry at play amongst traders from the coast, most likely between Mrima traders from places like Pangani, Tanga, and, to a lesser extent, Bagamoyo, on the one hand, and coastal traders with an Omani genealogy operating via Zanzibar and Bagamoyo, on the other. Tippu Tip, who was of mixed-Omani-African descent, built his realm in Manyema using Kasongo, which is some 50 kilometres southeast of Nyangwe, as his powerbase.³⁸ That is, the coastal and the Omani commercial systems in Manyema operated side-by-side.

(2) I do not intend to reconstruct the history of the Manyema “Arabs” in this book, but the factional competition in Manyema had repercussions for Ujiji. In Gooding’s reconstruction of the competition between Omani and Mrima in Ujiji, he

36 Adrian S. Wisnicki, “Livingstone in 1871” in *Livingstone Online*, (eds.) Adrian S. Wisnicki and Megan Ward (College Park: University of Maryland Libraries, 2017), <http://livingstoneonline.org/uuid/node/ee070bc7-7f68-4e61-962d-038e1703231a> (accessed 30 September 2024).

37 Gooding, “Lake Tanganyika,” Chapter 2, especially 82.

38 Bontinck, *L'autobiographie*, 101.

concludes that the Omani prevailed by around 1880 just like they did in Manyema.³⁹ However, I do not concur that the coastal or Mrima traders lost. Under the leadership of Mohamad bin Khalfan al-Barwani, aka Rumaliza, the coastal faction was integrated in the Omani-led complex as junior partners, granting respect and recognition to the ageing Mrima leaders, who had come from Pangani in the 1840s. I argue that the real target of the Omani powerplay was the African polities around the northern half of Lake Tanganyika including the Jiji, with whom the Mrima faction had maintained good relations. Similar to Manyema, leaders of the caravan trade complex attempted to overrule local leaders in the region and to replace the political orders to gain access to ivory northwest of Lake Tanganyika. The Omani in Ujiji wanted to subdue the Jiji leadership rather than their Mrima competitors and partners. This process of proto-colonization was not entirely successful. For instance, Rumaliza never managed to subdue Burundi. Moreover, the process was aborted when European colonial conquest took over and the Arab-Swahili caravan trade complex was defeated in Manyema. Nevertheless, similar disruptive actions were initiated in the area around Ujiji and the northern half of Lake Tanganyika, about one decade after the disruptions in Manyema and surrounding areas in what later became Congo. The movement of this phenomenon was west-to-east and not east-to-west as might be expected if the caravan trade complex is conceived as something coming from the East African coast.

(3) Likewise, the cultural process of urbanization in the area under scrutiny came from the west and was driven by people from the region who joined the caravan trade complex. Regardless of whether they were attracted by expectations of success and standing, had been violently captured or sold as enslaved people, or were compelled to find a new livelihood after the disruption of political and moral orders, people in the caravan trade complex developed and appropriated an urbane caravan culture inspired by the Swahili features of the Mrima or Omani caravan leaders. Indeed, for the process of cultural urbanization the distinction between Mrima and Omani was of minor importance. Even if some may have been versed in Arabic, the lingua franca for both factions was Kiswahili; almost all of them were at least partly of African descent, they were all Muslim, they all had more or less the same clothing and dietary habits. Moreover, the nineteenth-century sources seldom made the distinction between the two groups, instead lumping them together as “Arabs”. In the next subchapter, I come back to the Swahili nature of the urbane culture that developed in Central Africa. At this point, suffice to note that for the appropriation of urbanity in the caravans, what-

39 Gooding, *On the Frontiers*, Chapter 4.

ever nuances might have existed between Mrima and Omani did not make a difference, because it was the “Congolese” people who were the driving force of the process of emulation, urbanization, and Swahilization.

3.2.4 *Ngwana* Ideal

The most important level of interpretation is the level of the urbanizing people themselves. Gooding substantiates how in East Central Africa, people who joined the caravans could move rather quickly from servitude to a free and respectable status.⁴⁰ The coastal caravan traders were too small in number, the people in the caravans had ample opportunities to run off, and the caravan trade complex relied too heavily on the work of its porters, providers, and protectors that it was virtually impossible to impose bondage in a sustainable way. Slavery was widespread but was a means to an end rather than a goal in itself. In the context of East Central Africa, the end was the caravan trade complex and, in particular, the ivory trade. Enslaved people captured and traded in the region were also mainly intended for use within the region and not to be trafficked and traded on the coast.⁴¹ As a consequence, slavery was not a lasting status in the caravan trade complex around and west of Lake Tanganyika. Sooner or later, those who survived the hardships of the caravans became free men and women in search of respectability.⁴² This respectability was found in a *ngwana* ideal derived, adapted, and appropriated from Swahili culture.

Thus, the caravan trade complex provided a micro-cosmos in which an emancipated, urbane *ngwana* identity was constructed. Originally, *ngwana* is a Swahili concept known from the Indian Ocean coast where it refers to a distinguished status of urbane character, a kind of coastal aristocracy based on long-standing residence and appropriate manners. However, in East Central Africa, the idea(l) of *ngwana* led its own life. For sure, in East Central Africa, too, *ngwana* status was a claim of distinction, but it obviously had little to do with long-standing residence. Rather than a sign of establishment, it functioned as a sign of social and physical mobility in the context of the East Central African caravan trade. The passage from social death to new social ties – the passing through liminality – entailed becoming *ngwana*. This local yet mobile *ngwana* identity, rather than any direct coastal Swahili reference, became the source for Swahili urbanity in East Central African urban centres including in Ujiji.

⁴⁰ Gooding, “Slavery, ‘respectability’”.

⁴¹ Verney L. Cameron, *Across Africa*, Vol. II (London: Daldy, Isbister and Co., 1877), 28.

⁴² Gooding, “Slavery, ‘respectability’”.

Notwithstanding, this urbane *ngwana* culture deliberately emulated coastal Swahili features. Kiswahili as lingua franca, cotton clothing in kanzu fashion preferably made of merikani cloth from Massachusetts, a diet in which rice, mangoes, citrus, and other fruits became more central than usual in the Great Lakes region,⁴³ adherence to Islam,⁴⁴ and, in the case of urban settlement, the building of rectangular houses became markers of a Swahili urbanity in Central Africa. Evidently, these Swahili features have their origin on the Swahili coast, i.e. in roughly a millennium of Swahili urbanity on the East African Indian Ocean coast. Yet, that does not mean that the adoption – as well as adaptation and hybridization – of Swahiliness can be explained as a spread or diffusion from the coast to the interior. It was instead the crises in East Central Africa that drove dislocated people – first *waungwana* as far west as Manyema and later larger groups of people who were mobile along the central caravan route – in the region to actively choose and appropriate a locally available example. Thus, Swahiliness did not spread; instead people appropriated a Swahili “toolbox” to fulfil local needs caused by disruptions of social, political, economic, and moral orders as a consequence of transformations with a global dimension: the incorporation in the world-economy through caravan trade followed by colonial conquest. Urbanization within the caravan trade complex was a response to the effects of global transformations on the region, whereby not only a new urbane ideal but also a frame of reference on a larger, transregional scale provided an appealing and effective way to cope with the challenges of local disorder. Becoming Swahili, converting to Islam, and consuming imported commodities were all aspects of a life within a larger spatial scale of reference.

Let me depict a few trajectories. Unfortunately, there are no sources available to provide individual life histories – they do exist for people who took a Christian trajectory.⁴⁵ I can, however, reconstruct some typical trajectories that are likely to have taken place on a massive scale, given the functioning of the caravan trade complex. Even if I cannot identify individual life histories over a century ago, the way in which the caravan trade complex uprooted people from their living environments, on the one hand, and the services and occupations that were needed within the complex, on the other, make it obvious that innumerable people went

43 On the agricultural innovations within the western leg of the caravan trade complex, see Assan Kabemba, “Les Arabo-Swahili et les changements dans le domaine agricole: le cas du Maniema”, *Civilisations* 37, 1 (1987), 191–229.

44 See Philip Gooding, “Islam in the Interior of Precolonial East Africa: Evidence from Lake Tanganyika,” *The Journal of African History* 60, no. 2 (2019): 191–208.

45 Marcia Wright, *Strategies of slaves & women: life-stories from East/Central Africa* (London: James Currey, 1993).

through these trajectories, lived through these liminal phases, and account for the many thousands of people who inhabited the towns along the caravan trade routes by the turn of the century. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile not to lump all of these people together but to differentiate between different trajectories leading to urbanization. Where and how someone became part of this urbane culture, whether in the heartlands of the Manyema leg of the caravan trade complex or as fisher or farmer provisioning the caravan trade hub in Ujiji, would remain relevant for several decades.

The initial development of a *ngwana* ideal most likely occurred among locally recruited people who had a leading role in the mobile dimension of the caravan trade complex, i.e. the caravans themselves or, probably even more so, the patrols who collected ivory, who executed armed control over an area, and who were at the spearhead of capturing enslaved people. They were the “hordes of Tippu Tip,” as Page called them. Two functions come to mind: the *nyampara* or stewards of the long-distance caravans and the armed guards or patrols imposing control in the areas under the domination of the caravan trade complex. Thus, *waungwana* could be seen as the armed force of ivory and slave trade in Central Africa, clearly trying to distinguish themselves from unfree people in the caravan trade complex and from locally embedded people. They did so by emulating their direct superiors, adopting a dress code, a diet, a language, and a religion which was both from elsewhere and evoking connections over long distance – hence also distancing from local surroundings.

However, we notice that towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, European sources call almost everyone in the caravan trade complex *ngwana* and, after a few years in the complex, everybody seems to have adopted this lifestyle of distinction from a past self – which was at the same time a lifestyle of integration in a new living environment, hence a sign of liminality and transformation par excellence. Understanding the spread of the *ngwana* ideal helps us to get beyond the slave-slaver or free-unfree binary. Given the extreme imbalance between people from the coast and the workforce they relied on in Central Africa, the caravan trade complex could not keep huge masses in unfree relations. As a consequence, opportunities for social mobility were essential for the success of the complex. On the Indian Ocean coast, too, there was a social hierarchy between stages of slavery and liberty, and there were maroon communities outside of the plantations.⁴⁶ But more than a thousand kilometres to the west, moving up the social ladder went relatively fast and was widespread, at least for those who remained within the caravan trade complex.

⁴⁶ Glassman, “The Bondman’s New Clothes.”

Hence, also those people who entered the complex as an enslaved person or as refugee and were not shipped away could acquire *ngwana* status and appropriate the accompanying lifestyle within a couple of years. West of the lake, most people who were enslaved remained in the region. Thus, not only people working in the caravans as such but also plantation workers and people employed as domestic slaves had the leverage to exert social mobility, or else to run away. The same is true for people who entered the caravan trade complex as farmers or fishers, contributing to the provisioning as formally free workers. The distinction between free and unfree was gradual and ambivalent. The person working as a domestic slave of a rich patron could be better off than a fisher desperately in search of productive fishing grounds or a poor peasant struggling to survive bad harvests and price fluctuations.⁴⁷ In this context, the visible and achievable status that people aspired to and could reach within a reasonable period of a few years' time was *ngwana*.

By the end of the century, whoever ended up in the caravan trade complex also acquired the accompanying culture, drawing on emulating Swahili urbanity. Some did not and dropped out, stayed behind, shifted to a Christian alternative or were "liberated from slavery" to the same effect, or managed to return to their area or origin. Options were manifold, but for the purposes of this book, those who became *ngwana*, those who urbanized on the move are the ones that matter for the urbanization of Ujiji.

3.3 The Making of Urban Ujiji

The eventual urbanization and urbanity of Ujiji went hand in hand with the caravan trade complex. When the first Europeans arrived in Ujiji, the process of urbanization was still embryonic or "proto-urban," to quote Gooding.⁴⁸ By the time of European colonization, however, one could already speak of a proper urban centre. The urbanization had taken place within the caravan trade complex and

⁴⁷ See, for instance this observation by Edward C. Hore: "That gaily-dressed man with riches of cloth for exchange is a slave; and the poor woman who has brought her basket of meal into market to sell looks up to him in awe and envy as she walks past with her companion who carries her wares and is her slave. This party of naked savages just landing are half of them slaves, who will shortly be sold by the others; and a chance disturbance in the market, or some crisis in political affairs, and they themselves may become slaves too. At one point you may see a gang of poor creatures (newly captive) chained together in their misery; at another, a party of poorly-clad native porters carrying loads, and led by an amply-dressed and armed superior, who is, however, a slave, while they are free hired labourers" (Hore, *Tanganyika*, 73–74).

⁴⁸ Gooding, "Lake Tanganyika", 224.

slowly sedimented in emergent towns along the caravan routes. These towns were part of the complex and provided services to it. The driving force was the caravan trade and the leading people were vagrant. The towns were permanently inhabited in order to facilitate the caravans, but residence patterns and the size of towns were unpredictable and changing depending on the coming and going of caravans. As town life was already modelled after the *ngwana* ideal and led by coastal Omani and Mrima leaders, there was already an urban culture in the town. However, the ultimate boost for the urbanization process involving both a decisive growth of the urban population and a stabilization of urban residence occurred when the caravan trade complex lost its clout in the final decade of the nineteenth century.

The western leg of the caravan trade complex fell apart when colonizers rather than caravan traders became the strongest military power in the region, crystalizing during the several wars of conquest, of which the fierce confrontation in 1892 to 1894 between the troops of the Congo Free State and their allies, on the one hand, and the alliance around the Arab-Swahili, on the other, was the most decisive for the region under scrutiny. Several died, some changed sides, and others moved away. The latter were central to the sudden growth and accelerated urbanization of Ujiji in the late-nineteenth century. Nyangwe and Kasongo lost importance beyond their immediate vicinities, whereas thousands of refugees from the collapsed caravan trade complex in East Congo crossed or circumvented Lake Tanganyika. Many of them settled in Ujiji, the first important settlement across the lake, bringing an already acquired urbane, *ngwana* culture with them. They did not introduce this cultural ideal to Ujiji, as the caravan trade complex had already left its imprint on town life before. But the arrival of vast numbers of Swahilized new inhabitants in Ujiji who were there to stay altered the town's appearance. The outcome of this process – let's say urban Ujiji around 1900 – was a town predominantly populated by people originating from across the lake, in what had become East Congo by then. Those issuing from the caravan trade complex had adopted an urban lifestyle already before arriving in Ujiji, whereas refugees fleeing the unabated violence in the Congo Free State did so in the immediate aftermath of settling there. Either way, the urban population of Ujiji were not Jiji people. Around 1880, Omani military-commercial leaders had prevailed over local leadership in the town of Ujiji and in some of the market hubs around the lake. By 1900 at the latest, also demographically Ujiji was no longer a Jiji place.

Having provided a narrative from globalization and caravan trade via Man'yema and the *ngwana* ideal to a Swahili urbanity, the blackspot of my story so far is, of course, what happened in Ujiji itself. As most existing literature dealing with Ujiji has done precisely that, focusing on the town, I gave priority to what I have found lacking in the dominant narrative. Yet, the time has come to integrate the

view from the place in the remainder of this chapter. Obviously, other historians who have written from within have also paid attention to the caravan trade, to *waungwana*, to coastal culture and so forth, to the extent that these “external” influences manifested themselves on the spot. My point is that these influences are not external but the very heart of the urbanization process even if they occurred largely outside the actual town in the making.

Meanwhile, the locality of Ujiji in the second half of the nineteenth century also matters. I have already introduced the strategic advantages of its location at the margins of the Great Lakes region, close to the Uvinza saltpans, with comfortable access to Lake Tanganyika and a Jiji population skilled in navigation. Stacked on top of that came the caravan trade complex linking Central Africa with the Indian Ocean and the world market. The interplay between the regional lacustrine trade system and the long-distance caravan trade complex complemented with power relations between coastal traders and Jiji authorities in and around Ujiji are crucial to understand the development of the area. I will first introduce the foundational connections between coastal traders and Jiji leaders and then explain the confrontational growing apart of the long-distance caravan trade complex and the regional Jiji realm.

3.3.1 The Pangani Triumvirate

After some peripatetic expeditions by coastal traders in the previous years, the first coastal people to settle in the Lake Tanganyika region came from Pangani to Ujiji around 1845. Mwinyi Akida bin Tayari, Mwinyi Hassani and Mwinyi Heri bin Mwinyi Mkuu el-Ghaskani – sometimes referred to as the “Watu wa Mrima” or people from the coast – formed some kind of triumvirate in Ujiji town for the following 40 odd years.⁴⁹ Unlike the big caravan traders who established their businesses in East Central Africa over the following decades, these pioneers from the coast were the decisive political brokers in the town and the land of Ujiji.

In nineteenth-century accounts by European travellers, however, Mwinyi Akida and Mwinyi Hassani are often ignored, whereas these same accounts widely recognized Mwinyi Heri as the leader in Ujiji town. In the early 1870s, even the latter’s position was questioned by the emerging caste of Omani Arab traders, but because the leader of the Arabs’ opposition died in 1876, the leader-

⁴⁹ Brown, “Ujiji”, 56 and 127–128; TNA, Kigoma District Book, Vol. III: Tribal History and Legends: Mjiji Tribe, sheet 2.

ship of Mwinyi Heri was soon unrivalled again.⁵⁰ Yet, this ephemeral contestation of Mwinyi Heri's leadership, on the one hand, and the neglect of Mwinyi Akida's and Mwinyi Hassani's authority, on the other, in most contemporary accounts requires closer scrutiny.

According to Edward Coode Hore, it was not Mwinyi Heri but Mwinyi Akida "who enjoyed the respect of Jiji authorities and who was frequently called to their council meetings and political ceremonies".⁵¹ This statement changes the perspective of most European accounts in two regards. First, Hore paid attention to the respect of the Jiji authorities rather than the recognition of leadership by the townspeople, in general, and the Arab traders, in particular. Second, as we have seen in Chapter 2, Hore was an atypical observer of Ujiji in comparison to other European visitors in the second half of the nineteenth century, not because he was a particularly good observer (except when it came to his passion for molluscs) but because before 1890, no other European spent more time in Ujiji than he did. Most Europeans travelled through the area, as many Arab traders had done before and continued to. Even if Hore seems to have been a headstrong nuisance,⁵² his repeated and long stays in Ujiji between 1878 and 1888 allowed him to understand power relations that went unnoticed to short-term visitors. He understood that in the late 1870s, local power was not primarily or, at least, not only based on recognition by Arabs but still by good relations with Jiji authorities. Furthermore, he did not take the town of Ujiji but a slightly larger area around it as the crucial point of reference for power relations. As Brown put it, there was a "disjunction between internal politics [in town] and merchant-African relations".⁵³

Mwinyi Heri was the uncontested leader in the town. For the Arabs, he was their liaison with the Jiji rulers. He was commercially successful all the way up to the ivory-market of Uvira on the northernmost tip of Lake Tanganyika and was recognized by the Sultan of Zanzibar as the first *liwali* (governor) of Ujiji, Uvira, and Uguha by 1880.⁵⁴ Mwinyi Akida, on the other hand, was clearly less successful in commercial and political terms but probably had better connections with the Jiji authorities, as Hore pointed out. The third member of the triumvirate, Mwinyi

50 Brown, "Ujiji", 132–136. Brown refers to Herny Morton Stanley and Verney Lovett Cameron. More references to Mwinyi Heri's background and recognition can be found in Bontinck, *L'auto-biographie*, 254 n333.

51 Reference to the letter of Hore to Whitehouse, Ujiji, 9 February 1880 and 26 February 1880, Box No. 3, Folder 1/B, LMS, in: Brown, "Ujiji", 135.

52 For an assessment of the trouble that he tended to make, see Brown, "Ujiji", 143–144.

53 Brown, "Ujiji", 135.

54 Brown, "Ujiji", 59, 134 and 140.

Hassani, is said to have been a sage who was “well-versed in Koranic knowledge”.⁵⁵ He often replaced Mwinyi Heri, when the latter was away on one of his many commercial expeditions. In short, Mwinyi Heri was more oriented towards the caravan traders, Mwinyi Akida towards the Jiji surroundings, and Mwinyi Hassani had religious authority and was probably seen as the *primus inter pares* within the triumvirate.

Both Mwinyi Akida and Mwinyi Hassani were rewarded for their military assistance to *mteko* (Ha official for the land) Hebeza – whom we have encountered in Chapter 2 – and *mwami* (king) Mugasa in their fight against Mugasa’s brother Ruyama in the early 1860s. The struggle was first and foremost one of succession between two Jiji brothers after the death of the Jiji *mwami* Lusimbi. However, the escape of Ruyama to Burundi after his defeat may give some credence to a German colonial interpretation, suggesting that the battle was a defence against a Rundi assault.⁵⁶ More importantly, the fight took place against a background of conflict between the Jiji highlands, who supported Ruyama, and the commercial interest around the town of Ujiji, from which our Swahili triumvirate, *mteko* Hebeza, and, in the end, the prevailing *mwami* Mugasa profited in one way or another.⁵⁷ Mwinyi Akida became *mtwale* (local or sub-chief) of Bangwe and Kasia, while Mwinyi Hassani obtained Mkamba⁵⁸ near Bangwe.

Mwami, *mtwale* and *mteko* were three positions of authority amongst the Wajiji. Given that the Wajiji are a part of the larger Ha ethnic group, who in turn is closely related to the Warundi, we find these functions there as well. The *mwami*, often translated as “king”, was the highest political authority, although his power was not unlimited. He unequivocally had the power to appoint a *mtwale* or *umutware* (plural *watwale* or *abatware*), who exercised the administrative authority on regional and local levels but had no control over the land. These chieftainships were sometimes inherited from father to son, but only with the approval of the *mwami* who could always dispose of his *abatware*. The *mteko* or *umuteko* (plural *wateko* or *abateko*), on the other hand, was a hereditary official responsible for

55 Brown, “Ujiji”, 138n27.

56 TNA: G8/900: Anträge auf Überlassung von Kronland, Kronlandserklärungen, Verpachtung und Verkauf von Kronland, Bez. Udjidji. Bd. 2: 1906–1916.

57 TNA, Kigoma District Book, Vol. III: Tribal History and Legends: Mjiji Tribe, sheets 1–2. Especially, the 1929 “Tribal History – Mjiji Tribe” by C.H.B. Grant, District Officer of Kigoma District, and C.J. Bagenal, Senior Commissioner of Kigoma Province. For the offices held by Grant and Bagenal in 1929, see TNA, Kigoma Provincial Book: List of Officers in Charge of Kigoma Province.

58 Mkamba is the northeastern part of the land between Bangwe and Ruanza (Kigoma). Mkamba is sometimes used for the Bight of Nyassa in the Bay of Kigoma. (See “Map Kigoma Western Sheet” in TNA, Western Province [Regional Office Tabora] [63], T.2/41: Kigoma Township-General 1921–1950).

distributing the land and performing rituals to keep the land fertile and generous. The *wateko* were beyond the control of the *mwami*, which has to do with the fairly recent establishment of this political order. This political construct was based on a Rundi or Tutsi settlement after an invasion not much earlier than 1800 and on the typical tension between cattle and land as basis for wealth and power, which appears in all traditions of origin in the African Great Lakes region. This explains the double Jiji power structure, whereby the power of the *mwami* and his appointees had its origins outside of the land and was cattle-based – hence mobile –, whereas the land is taken care of by autochthonous – stemming from the land itself – officials.⁵⁹ Mwinyi Akida and Mwinyi Hassani were, thus, integrated into the Jiji officialdom, albeit in an allochthonous function that was not automatically hereditary.

Mwinyi Heri was also part of the gang but, at first sight, not rewarded to the same extent as his companions. This may hint at a more limited involvement in the fight or an implicit hierarchy between the three men. In this hierarchy, Mwinyi Heri would then stand beneath instead of above the other two. Notwithstanding, according to Cameron,⁶⁰ Mwinyi Heri married a daughter of the chief (*mwami*) of Ujiji – i.e. the land of the Jiji, not the town – in 1874, which would also underscore his close relations to Jiji authorities, albeit more than a decade later than Mwinyi Akida and Mwinyi Hassani. For the rest of his successful career until his death in 1885, Mwinyi Heri maintained close relations with Hebeza – the *mteko* of Ugoi in Ujiji town –, which may have been just as useful in helping him to build his leadership in Ujiji town as any chieftainship could have been.⁶¹

Mwinyi Heri resolutely built his stronghold and connections in the town of Ujiji, of which Ugoi and Kawele were important parts, and where the main market for the long-distance caravan trade was situated. Mwinyi Akida and Mwinyi Hassani had been appointed *watwale* around Bangwe, hence not in the town of Ujiji proper. This may help explain why Mwinyi Heri was recognized as the leader of the coastal traders in Ujiji, meant as the town, whereas the other two should be situated in a wider area. Yet, where they were *mtwale* and where they

⁵⁹ Brown, “Ujiji”, 22–34. Also see Stephen J. Rockel, “The Tutsi and the Nyamwezi: Cattle, Mobility, and the Transformation of Agro-Pastoralism in Nineteenth-Century Western Tanzania”, *History in Africa* 46 (2019): 231–261.

⁶⁰ Cameron, *Across Africa*, 174. Also see Karin Pallaver, “Muslim communities, Long-distance Trade and Wage Labour along the central caravan road, Tanzania, 19th century”, *Storicamente*, 8, no. 20 (2012), https://storicamente.org/pallaver_tanzania (accessed 30 September 2024). Pallaver writes that marrying the daughter of the *mwami* of Bujiji implied acquiring the status of chief.

⁶¹ TNA, Kigoma District Book, Vol. III: Tribal History and Legends: Mjiji Tribe, sheet 2; Brown, “Ujiji”, 130–131 and 136.

lived, did not necessarily coincide. Hore wrote about Mwinyi Akida – “this chief of Bangwe I delight to think of as my friend”⁶² – that he visited him on “the little flat oval island Ruanza, on which are the houses of Muinyi Akida (an Waswahili or half-caste, or “coast” Arab)”.⁶³ Where he lived – the island of Ruanza in Kigoma⁶⁴ – was not the same place as where he was local chief – the peninsula of Bangwe. I do not know where Mwinyi Hassani lived, but given that he often replaced Mwinyi Heri, when the latter was out of town, it is not unlikely that he lived in the town of Ujiji as well.

Regardless of their exact situation within the Kigoma-Ujiji area, the basis of the triumvirate’s local power can clearly be tied to their supportive and decisive role surrounding the installation of *mwami* Mugasa as well as the contacts and confidence which obviously already existed at that time. It strengthened their own position, the Jiji factions around Hebeza who ventured into commercial activities himself, and the Jiji traditional power structure as well as mutual trust and loyalty between them.

However, with Mwinyi Akida and Mwinyi Heri passing away in 1882 and 1885 respectively, the power relations shifted. The strong man of Ujiji became the Omani Arab trader Mohamed bin Khalfan al-Barwani, better known as Rimaliza. When Rimaliza established a territorial division around the northern part of the lake by the late 1880s (see above), he took the ivory-rich northern tip for himself and gave stretches on the western bank of the lake to a certain Nassor bin Sef, but on top of that, the Burundian shoreline south of Uzige (the region around present-day Bujumbura) came under the control of Salim bin (son of) Mwinyi Heri and the shoreline directly adjacent to Ujiji was under the authority of Mwinyi Hassani, the last remaining member of the triumvirate.⁶⁵ The old coastal authorities in Ujiji, therefore, were not so much replaced but integrated in Rimaliza’s new power structure. The good relations with the Jiji authorities, however, lost importance under the short-lived military and territorial rule by Rimaliza.

⁶² Hore, *Tanganyika*, 83.

⁶³ Hore, *Tanganyika*, 82.

⁶⁴ As mentioned before, this island has become a peninsula because of the lowering of the level of the lake.

⁶⁵ Brown, “Ujiji”, 168–169. It is not completely clear who Nassor bin Sef is. Jacques Marissal mentions a certain Nassor, but cannot confirm who he is (Jacques Marissal, “L’Islam et le Burundi à la fin du XIX-ème siècle”, *Culture et société: revue de civilisation burundaise* 1 [1978]: 63). Following Bontinck’s description of Nassor bin Khalfan al-Barwani, the brother of Rimaliza and nicknamed Bwana Soro, he could be one of the strong men in the new territorial order and is perhaps the same person as Nassor bin Sef (Bontinck, *L’autobiographie*, 266 n404).

3.3.2 Urbanization between Connection and Disconnection

Inspired by Richard Reid's focus on war in the making of precolonial Eastern Africa and Jonathon Glassman's analysis of rivalries on the coast leading up to the Abushiri revolt,⁶⁶ Gooding adds the importance of competition and conflict amongst the coastal leaders in Ujiji.⁶⁷ Mirroring what has been said about the power relations between Nyangwe and Kasongo in Manyema, Gooding reconstructs in detail how and why the shift in the balance of power in Ujiji from the Mrima faction to the Omani Arabs took place. By the time Mwinyi Heri died in 1885,⁶⁸ and the Omani around Rumaliza extended their power around the northern section of the lake, it looks as if the Ujiji "Arabs" were at the height of their power. Yet, it was also the time when, we read, "Ujiji had lost much of its importance" compared to Nyangwe and Kasongo by the late 1880s, and the market of Kigoma-Gungu in the Ujiji area had surpassed the one of Kawele-Ugoi in Ujiji-town.⁶⁹ The market of Kawele-Ugoi was controlled by the coastal traders in the actual town of Ujiji, whereas Kigoma-Gungu was more popular with the Jiji people from the wider region. The explanation for the paradox that Omani dominance and expansion coincided with lost importance and smaller scale is the missing link to single out the town of Ujiji as urban, and as standing apart from other parts of the area today known as Kigoma-Ujiji. The histories of Ujiji and of Kigoma became distinct histories and, contrary to what the placename would make one expect, Kigoma's history remained closer to Jiji history than Ujiji's.

The town of Ujiji did not decline in absolute terms, but its positionality within a thriving caravan trade complex was redefined. On the scale of the caravan trade complex, Ujiji had become an interface between the produce-procuring and power-yielding western leg of the complex and the transportation infrastructure eastward. The coastal traders had by then also organized their own navigation on the lake, introducing ever larger ships, based on the dhow shipbuilding technology from the Indian Ocean coast. Moreover, the coastal traders of Ujiji expanded the complex to the north, gaining control over the shores of the northern section of the lake and intruding into the area further to the north, yet failing to subdue

⁶⁶ Richard Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa: The Patterns & Meanings of State-level Conflict in the Nineteenth Century* (London: The British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2007), 110–118; Glassman, *Feasts and Riots*.

⁶⁷ Gooding, *On the Frontiers*, Chapter 4.

⁶⁸ Brown, "Ujiji", 164–175.

⁶⁹ Hermann von Wissmann, *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa: From the Congo to the Zambesi in the years 1886 and 1887* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1891), 252; also see Gooding, "Lake Tanganyika", 243.

Burundi and Rwanda.⁷⁰ Like in Manyema, a dynamic of disruption, raids, and the recruitment and attraction of followings in the caravan trade complex as well as a process of appropriating *ngwana* culture took place in the newly occupied areas to the north.⁷¹

On the flipside of the observation that Nyangwe and Kasongo had become more important, lies the fact that Rumaliza, Mwinyi Heri, and their *waungwana* copied the success formula of Tippu Tip's rule to the area north of Ujiji. No longer having the largest market in the area must be juxtaposed with an increasing logistic and strategic role, whereby the immediate market functions and the market size might have no longer been the most telling criterion to assess the relative success of the town.

Parallel to the growth of Ujiji as a logistic interface and military-strategic regional centre, we should interpret the growth of the market at Kigoma-Gungu as an indication that the two commercial spheres – the regional lacustrine and the long-distance caravan trade – had become more autonomous from each other. In the middle of the century, when coastal traders had just arrived at Lake Tanganyika, the complementarity of the lacustrine and the caravan trade as well as of the portage over land and the navigation on the lake had been in the interest of all parties involved: coastal, Nyamwezi, and Jiji traders. A quarter of a century later, the regional lacustrine and the long-distance caravan trade were increasingly disconnected, with the lacustrine trade, at best, still playing a serving role in provisioning caravans. As such, the rivalry between Mrima and Omani coastal leaders in Ujiji was primarily a sorting out of the playing field amongst them. The more decisive evolution was that the caravan trade complex and their *ngwana* rank and file had taken the upper hand over local polities, not in the least over the Jiji. Not so much the individual Mrima leaders, but the Mrima approach of maintaining good relations with the Jiji leadership and cooperating with Jiji navigators became obsolete. The coastal people were still outnumbered, but the *waungwana* were not. And, as they had guns and the Jiji did not – or at least not in comparable numbers –, the outcome of the struggle over control was quite predictable.⁷²

Mutatis mutandis, the same is true for the struggle between the coastal rulers and the European colonial conquerors in the following decade, when asymmetries in armament and shifting alliances led to the destruction of the caravan trade complex in Central Africa. The ensuing collapse of the caravan trade com-

⁷⁰ Emile Mworoha et al., *Histoire du Burundi: des origines à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Hatier, 1987).

⁷¹ Castryck, "Living Islam".

⁷² Page, "The Manyema Hordes"; Brown, "Ujiji".

plex west of the lake led to the fleeing of thousands of coastal people, *wau-ngwana*, and refugees, which caused a further increase of the population of Ujiji. This resulted in the paradoxical situation that the town had never been more populated than when the political-commercial system which had given rise to the town fell apart.

By then, the micro-geography of settlement, trade patterns, and power relations in Kigoma-Ujiji had already ingrained the distinction between the town of Ujiji and the area around the Bay of Kigoma and the hills of Gungu. Neither the Jiji people nor the relatively small coastal contingent but the urbanized *wau-ngwana* from Manyema and from around Lake Tanganyika became the nucleus of a Swahili urban community in Ujiji. The largest groups of urban residents were Wabwari and Wagoma who had come from across the lake as fishers and farmers, being attracted by fertile land and fertile fishing grounds, while also provisioning the emerging town and the caravans. Slightly smaller in number, but still numerically and politically significant were the people from the Manyema heartlands of the western caravan trade complex.

The fact that *waungwana* had already acquired an urbane culture on the move and that they formed the growing core population of the town of Ujiji, largely disconnected from the Jiji surrounding, are the main reasons to consider Ujiji as urban by the 1880s at the latest. Here, I differ from Gooding, who claims that towns on the shores of Lake Tanganyika were only “proto-urban” and not yet urban, when colonization set in.⁷³ He acknowledges the role of “*ngwana* identity around Lake Tanganyika”, the “emergence of a distinctly commercial culture”, the connecting role of the markets of Kigoma (Kigoma-Gungu) and Ujiji (Kawe-Ugoi), and “cultural intermixing and overlapping”. Yet, he states that the people living there cannot be considered “permanent or distinctly urban” and that they perpetuated “chiefly hierarchies and descent groups that governed rural areas”. Therefore, the towns around Lake Tanganyika, including Kigoma-Ujiji, fall short of being urban and are described by Gooding as “proto-urban settlements”.⁷⁴

For Kigoma-Gungu and for the rest of the lacustrine region, I follow Gooding’s argument. But for Ujiji, the urbanization process, the intermixing, its permanence, and above all the distinction from rural areas had already characterized the place before colonization, at the latest when the Omani faction overruled rural rulers around 1880 – and increasingly so during the first decades of the colonial period. An urban culture transmitted via the caravan trade complex en-

⁷³ Gooding draws on my use of the term “proto-colonial” to coin the concept “proto-urban” as applicable to the dynamics in nineteenth-century Kigoma-Ujiji, as well as to other “proto-urban” towns on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Gooding, “Lake Tanganyika”, 224 n22.

⁷⁴ Gooding, “Lake Tanganyika”, 224–232.

abled a town life by a population disconnected from their respective (rural) areas of origin and more and more independent from the surrounding Jiji rural area. In Kigoma-Gungu, the hierarchies and descent groups that governed rural areas were indeed perpetuated. In contrast, Ujiji was overwhelmingly populated by people who were not of Jiji origin. At least until the end of the century, Ujiji was ruled by people of coastal origin and thereafter – bar colonial overrule – dominated by people emulating the *ngwana* ideal of the caravan trade complex and issuing from Manyema or from around Lake Tanganyika. Their agricultural and fishing occupations were in line with the town's economic demands, provided the staple foods of the Swahili culture introduced above, and were distinct from the farming and livestock agriculture in the mountainous areas around the town. Above all, they were part of a chain of urbanity stretching from Manyema to the Indian Ocean, which cannot be reduced to its local manifestation in Kigoma-Ujiji alone.

By the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a genuinely East Central African Swahili urbanity allowed for many thousands of migrants from around and across the lake to adopt and develop a group identity that fulfilled several needs against a background of radical transformation: It provided an alternative to a lost frame of reference and offered a new order after and out of the debris of by now defunct old orders. It was in tune with an intensified connectedness between Central Africa and the Indian Ocean world, it entailed an Islamic worldview that matched the enlarged scale of operation under the global condition, and, at the same time, it was locally entrenched in towns along the central caravan route, above all in urban Ujiji. Thus, Ujiji around 1900 can be understood as a portal of globalization with a high density of effective strategies to cope with globally induced transformations and as a liminal place, where thousands of people were living through these transformations in their individual lives. Parallel to these intense connections on different spatial scales, shifting from the most spatially specific to the most spatially diffuse,⁷⁵ the urban population and its leadership had disconnected, or at least drastically reduced their ties to their immediate Jiji surroundings.

75 After Cooper, "Conflict and Connection", 1539.