

Conclusion

The location where Burton and Speke disagreed on the Source of the Nile during an expedition of the Royal Geographical Society in the 1850s, where Stanley found Livingstone on behalf of the *New York Herald* in the 1870s, which African-Arab caravan traders used as a stepping stone for their commercial and increasingly political endeavours in East Central Africa throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, which people from across Lake Tanganyika turned into a Swahili urban centre towards the turn of the centuries, which German colonizers chose as the terminus of the Central Railroad and the home port for the largest freshwater ship in Africa before the First World War, and over which Belgian and British officials quarrelled during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, was at the heart of East Central African history for about three quarters of a century.

For the following three quarters of a century, complaints in colonial reports, Tanzanian parliamentary interventions, oral testimony, and the scarcity of literature about the town's history after the 1920s give the impression that the town had been lost in oblivion. However, during this seeming oblivion, colonial, national, regional, and global challenges were met with resilience and creative problem solving. The prominent role of the people of Kigoma-Ujiji during the decolonization process has been recognized in Tanzanian national narratives, even though this recognition ignores that what these people did was at odds with national-territorial views. Their translocal responses – combining local rootedness with long-distance connectedness – countered territorializing policies on different scales. The construction and imposition of a Jiji or Ha ethnic area, colonial “tribalization” policies, Tanzanian nation-building and nationalization, and the territorial definition of belonging and alienness disregarded the town but were also discarded by its people. Taking the urban history of Kigoma-Ujiji serious counterbalances master narratives that privilege territorial, national or colonial state perspectives.

In this book, I bridge the two seemingly distinct periods in the history of Kigoma-Ujiji in two ways. Firstly, I take the perception of prominence and of oblivion serious. In Chapter 2, I reconstruct the imaginations and representations of Kigoma-Ujiji from the mid-nineteenth century – when the town was already talked about, but did not yet exist – until the present. In each of the subsequent chapters, aspects of Kigoma-Ujiji's perceived past prominence are picked up and, at the end of Chapter 7, this narrative culminates in an analysis of how the “imperial debris” of a century and a half of imaginations and representations is taken

up in the town today and turned into an opportunity to overcome current crises. Age-old and partly biased perceptions are thus appropriated locally and employed to shape the transformations that are going on today. Outside perceptions rebounding on that place, provide a first narrative thread woven through this global urban history of Kigoma-Ujiji.

Secondly, and primarily, I interpret Kigoma-Ujiji as a space of transformation, where overwhelming global changes that put people in the region under existential pressure, are appropriated again and again, thus shaping how global processes unfold locally. From this vantage point, Chapters 3 to 7 provide a chronological journey through the history of Kigoma-Ujiji, analysing six moments of global transformation. Chapter 8 is a conclusion to this chronological journey, looking back from the present while using a spatial analytical framework.

The local shaping of global transformations, however, is not a straightforward process. It often takes a long time and, meanwhile, the outcome remains uncertain. The tension between highly uncertain protracted processes and recurrently shaping global transformations in local terms has been resolved by combining the analytical categories “liminal town” and “portal of globalization”. The history of Kigoma-Ujiji is characterized by peripheral traits, a gradual marginalization, and pressure on the positionality of the town, but also by resilience, originality, and creativity at moments of transformation. This is where “liminal town” and “portal of globalization” are brought together. Both concepts refer to spaces of transformation, but “liminal town” underscores the uncertainty and precariousness while “portal of globalization” highlights centrality and a high concentration of global transformations. The concepts gain more explanatory strength by combining them: Applying the analytical category “portal of globalization” should not narrow our sight to moments when globalization is successfully shaped, but should also account for complications, intermittent interruptions, protracted transformations, periods of stagnation, and the uncertainty of the outcome while a transformation is ongoing, i.e. to the liminality of the transformation. The other way around, the liminal town is not only characterized by protracted uncertain transformations, but also by the resilience to keep going and the confidence that liminality is a phase that, sooner or later, will usher in a new state. Rather than claiming that liminal towns are portals of globalization – and vice versa – I demonstrate that the intersection between both concepts helps us better understand how globalizations work in specific times and spaces.

Before having read this book, it may have sounded awkward to consider Kigoma-Ujiji as a space where globalizations are shaped. To use a visual metaphor: only with a fisheye lens would Kigoma-Ujiji appear on a hypothetical global picture focalized on the centre – wherever that may be. Even then, the fisheye lens would produce a visual distortion scaling down the edges and expanding what is

near the focal point. This is a metaphor for how the world and globalizations are indeed usually gazed at: if not bluntly ignoring, then at least scaling down the edges and distorting the entire picture. Refocusing on the edge of the global picture, I show that globalizations do not just happen to the people of Kigoma-Ujiji but are also actively made there.

