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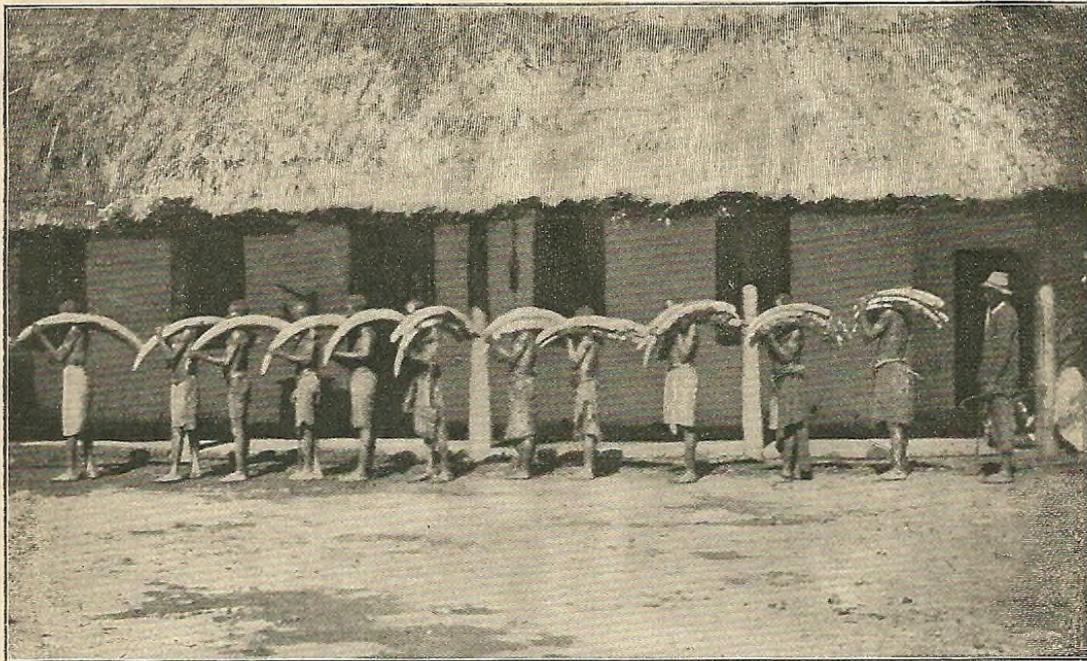
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“A rough-and-tumble business”? – The Arab-Swahili Long-Distance Trade and the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor from c.1850 to c.1900



PART OF AN IVORY CARAVAN.

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List of Abbreviations

A.L.C.	African Lakes Company
B.C.A.P.	British Central African Protectorate
B.S.A.C.	British South Africa Company
C.F.S.	Congo Free State
L.M.S.	London Missionary Society

Introduction

The Arab-Swahili and the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in the Nineteenth Century

East-Central Africa in the nineteenth-century was a region riven with internal discord, which was accentuated by intrusive foreign groups that prolonged and worsened the violence and rivalries that punctuated everyday life. The Arab-Swahili of Africa's east coast were one of the most prominent of these groups and acted primarily as traders and merchants, seeking to export the commodities of the African interior, such as ivory and slaves, to the markets of the world.

This thesis will examine the Arab-Swahili traders and their activities in a specific region of the East-Central African interior, namely the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor. This region of elevated, marshy land is situated between lakes Tanganyika and Mweru and represents one of the first places where the Arab-Swahili directly entered African political life, dominating the land themselves as political elites, rather than simply trading with the pre-existing African authorities. Mweru-Tanganyika is amongst the best places in Central Africa to explore the impact of coastal activities upon the indigenous peoples of Africa, with the Arab-Swahili exploiting both internal political divisions and the abundant natural resources.

In many ways the Corridor was exactly as its name suggests; a route between various chiefdoms, polities, ethnic groups, and spheres of control, used, and abused, by almost every resident group and external intruder. It was the site of continuous interaction between several different parties during the nineteenth-century, including: Central African chiefdoms and polities; coastal traders and their roving bands of *ruga-ruga* mercenaries; and Europeans, including both early explorers and missionary groups, and later colonial representatives of the British, Germans and Belgian-owned Congo Free State.

The focus of this work is the Arab-Swahili traders; the items and commodities they traded; their methods of military, political and economic control; and their

relationships with both the African peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika and the Europeans who began to enter the region in the nineteenth-century.

The importance of studying the activities of the Arab-Swahili in this region during the nineteenth-century cannot be understated. The introduction of the long-distance trade opened up East-Central Africa and Mweru-Tanganyika to the global markets, and irrevocably altered life for the peoples of the region. Prior to the Arab-Swahili penetration, the majority of people in the region had barely ventured beyond their immediate locales and had only limited knowledge of their neighbours, unless there was particularly extensive contact between the two through raiding or regional trade networks.

With their entrance into the global economy, the peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika developed from what was effectively a feudal hierarchical society of subsistence agriculture to one of wage labour in an industrialising colonial system of mining and commercial farming. Therefore, the Arab-Swahili can be credited as the people that introduced the modern world to East-Central Africa, despite their often violent and abhorrent methods.

This thesis will bring together what is at present a rather scattered and disparate literature on the topic. A definitive study of the Arab-Swahili in and around Mweru-Tanganyika has yet to be produced and this thesis will redress this scholarly gap and pull together the existing material on the subject into one single work. Separately, the existing primary and secondary sources present an incomplete picture. However, taken together they can be used to fully uncover the actions and events surrounding the rise to dominance of the coastal traders in Mweru-Tanganyika and their inevitable fall from grace at the hands of the European colonial administrations.

The central argument of this thesis will be the importance of the changing approach of the Arab-Swahili in East-Central Africa. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this thesis, the number Arab-Swahili traders in the African interior increased greatly over time, as did their influence on the African peoples they interacted with. With their increase in number and importance in Mweru-Tanganyika and the surrounding regions, the coastal traders changed their approach from one of peaceful and considered interaction with the African chiefs they encountered to one

of more overtly political and violent methods that ultimately led to their dominance in the region.

Whilst this change of strategy has been noted and explored by several historical works, what the authors have only partially conveyed is the fundamental effect that the tactical shift had, not only on the Arab-Swahili, but more importantly on the peoples of the Mweru-Corridor. This thesis will describe the methodological shift of the coastal traders, building on the foundation of past works to explain the effect this had on the Central African polities that interacted with the Arab-Swahili.

The socio-economic and political effects of the Arab-Swahili's increasingly developing interventionist policy in the middle decades of the nineteenth century were of vital importance. The arrival of the coastal traders brought unprecedented availability of trade goods for local chiefs and village headmen, which acted to remove their reliance on the distributive systems that supplied them with these same trade goods from their kings and paramounts. With their vassals no longer reliant upon them and their mercantile monopolies broken by the Arab-Swahili, the paramount chiefs of the polities of the Mweru-Tanganyika region found themselves increasingly weakened, to the point where the Arab-Swahili presented a very real threat and could forcibly remove opposing chiefs and install their rivals, who were more amenable to the demands of the coastal traders.

This leads on to the second major argument of this thesis, the importance of internal discord and violence amongst the African peoples of the region in assisting the eventual domination of the Arab-Swahili. This argument will combat the view held by many historians that the most influential reason for the success of intrusive groups in East-Central Africa, be they Arab-Swahili or European, was their military and economic superiority over the inhabitants of the African continent. It will be argued below that if the Arab-Swahili had encountered African polities with strong, centralised governments and paramounts able to maintain their commercial monopolies within their kingdoms, then the coastal traders would have had a far harder time gaining political control of the region.

What the Arab-Swahili in fact found were divided polities under weakened rulers with many rivals that the traders could force into power effectively as their puppets. These new paramount chiefs were then entirely beholden to the Arab-Swahili for their

power and unable to establish their own dominance at the risk of finding themselves replaced by yet another willing Arab-Swahili-backed pretender.

This change in behaviour amongst the African political elites, brought about by the intervention of the Arab-Swahili, proves the importance of internal division in allowing the coastal traders to become the dominant power in Mweru-Tanganyika before the arrival of the European colonialists in the final decades of the 1800s. Whilst having access to firearms and vast supplies of trade goods did undoubtedly assist the Arab-Swahili in their success in the region, they were still a tiny minority when compared to the numbers of the peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor. Without support from the divided African ruling classes and chiefs willing to trade with them, the Arab-Swahili would never have been able to alter their doctrine and become politically involved in the regions they were trading in. They would have remained a peripheral influence as they were with the Bemba polity, which had both strong leadership and effective and numerous military resources.

This thesis aims to encourage further study of this region of the African continent and, more particularly, its pre-colonial history. African history as a discipline may only be half a century old, but in the twenty-first-century very little scholarly attention is being paid to the pre-colonial history of the continent, whilst the ever-popular histories of colonialism and the slave trade remain well catered for. This is potentially a result of the lack of primary sources available for the pre-colonial era, due to the non-literate African cultures that predominate in sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of the written evidence that does exist is either early European first-hand accounts or, in some very rare cases, the memoirs and histories of intrusive groups, such as the Arab-Swahili traders. This makes original pre-colonial scholarship and research more difficult and reliant upon extensive fieldwork and oral histories if it wishes to be original in its subject matter.

That is not to say that these later histories of Africa are any less important than pre-colonial history, but all that is needed to see the obvious dearth of recent pre-colonial academic scholarship is to examine the bibliography of this very thesis. The bulk of the historical research contained therein is over forty years old and there is undeniably space in the historiography for a new generation of pre-colonial African historians to emerge. This thesis seeks to assist in this process and attract academic

attention to the pre-colonial history of this region of the continent, encouraging historians to reassess the existing scholarly research and reopen the pre-colonial African historical debate.

In approaching this thesis, it has been deemed necessary to subdivide Arab-Swahili activities in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor into four distinct, roughly chronological chapters. The first chapter aims to produce a definitive and accurate early history of coastal traders and their involvement in the Corridor and surrounding areas. This chapter will roughly cover the period between 1800 and 1880, beginning with the origins of Arab-Swahili involvement in the African interior and ending with their golden age of domination under the infamous trader Tippu Tip and his el-Murjebi clan associates.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the changing Arab-Swahili attitude towards involvement in internal African politics. Early coastal traders were relatively weak and were only able to operate in the interior with the blessing of the various African kings and chiefs of the region. However, Tippu Tip and his colleagues introduced a new pattern of activity for coastal traders, based upon the threat of, and willingness to use, violence to further their economic ends. Also central to this modus operandi was a new readiness for direct involvement in the politics of the African peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika, playing rival chiefs off against one another, whilst acting as mercenaries for their favoured candidates as long as the new chief proved amenable to their commercial demands and interests.

Having sketched the basic contours of Arab-Swahili history in the Mweru-Tanganyika corridor, the second chapter will focus more specifically on the economics of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade in slaves, ivory and other commodities. The Arab-Swahili were drawn into the interior of East-Central Africa by the promise of a ready supply of in-demand commodities that they could export to the coast as middlemen. A significant part of this chapter will be an examination of the development of pre-existing regional networks of exchange into the long-distance trade routes of the Arab-Swahili, and the societal effects of the trade upon the peoples along the routes. An example of this development of trade between African peoples and passing Arab-Swahili can be seen in the caravans' need for extensive resupplying, which provided a perfect market for foodstuffs and other essentials produced by local peoples.

Chapter 2 will also examine the commodities involved in the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade. It will initially discuss the main commercial items of the trade, ivory and slaves, before moving on to survey the natural resources of Mweru-Tanganyika also involved in commerce, such as iron, salt and copper. Having looked at the main exports of the trade, Chapter 2 will then discuss the trade goods imported by the Arab-Swahili into the African interior. Items such as cloth and beads were used in exchange for the desired commodities mentioned above.

Chapter 3 will explore the violence inherent in the Corridor throughout the nineteenth-century and how the patterns of that violence changed with the arrival of the Arab-Swahili. A major consideration in this chapter will be the impact of firearms on the interior, not just as weapons but as items of trade and exchange. A debate exists over the true impact and power of firearms in the hands of the Arab-Swahili in this period and this chapter will engage with that. The chapter ends with a discussion of Richard Reid's theory of "military revolution" and its possible applicability to Mweru-Tanganyika in the age of the long-distance trade.

The final chapter will then conclude the chronological examination of coastal trader activities in the African interior with an exploration of the last twenty years of the nineteenth-century and the interactions between the entrenched Arab-Swahili traders and the newly established European colonial administrations. This will be examined through the prism of two main case studies: Abdullah ibn Suliman and Nshimba of Kilwa Island. The analysis of the relationships between these two individuals and their followers and British and C.F.S. officials will bring the history of the Arab-Swahili to a close with their eventual fall from power and expulsion from Mweru-Tanganyika

Ethnography

This thesis deals with the interaction between various social groups in the African interior. Because of this, a brief introductory ethnographical description is most useful in order to better understand some of the events and dynamics that transpired in nineteenth-century Mweru-Tanganyika.

Drawing on missionary reports, *Echoes of Service*, the journal of the Plymouth Brethren, described the Arab-Swahili traders in the following terms: they were "called Arabs, or, by the Africans, Va-Lungwana, but they are a mongrel race, and not true

Arabs. They are however strict Mohammedans”.¹ This assessment, whilst blatantly tinged by racism and the personal aversion of the Plymouth Brethren missionaries to the coastal traders, does contain at least a grain of truth: the Arab-Swahili were a very heterogeneous group. From their name, it is easy to assume that the Arab-Swahili took the form of the stereotypical Arab trader, Middle-Eastern in appearance and Islamic in dress and culture. However, this assumption is largely untrue. As Peter Lary and Marcia Wright write, “Arab-Swahili” is more of an umbrella term referring to Swahili speakers originating from the Coast of modern-day Tanzania and the East African islands of Zanzibar, Kilwa and Pemba. In strictly racial terms, many of them would have been all but indistinguishable from the African peoples of the interior.²

As a result of their Islamic faith and the customs surrounding the institution of slavery, the Arab-Swahili were an incorporative group. Slaves, no matter their origin, would be introduced to the Swahili culture and Islam upon their arrival at Zanzibar or the Swahili coast.³ Islamic law demanded that slaves be treated well and the faith of Islam was central to the absorption of people. There were no racial biases and all were embraced if they would adopt the Swahili culture, learning the language, dressing and living as a Swahili and converting to Islam.⁴ In this respect, the Swahili coast was remarkably meritocratic, with success, wealth and increased prestige awaiting those who worked hard, free or unfree and independent of their origins.⁵ This was equally true of those who joined trading caravans venturing west into the African interior, with little heed being paid to one’s race or origins as they were all “Arab-Swahili”.⁶

This is not to say that the Arab-Swahili ranks did not also include ethnic Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle-East. Many traders from Oman, India, Saudi Arabia and Baluchistan established their bases in Zanzibar and on the Swahili coast. Whilst these newcomers had nothing ethnically in common with many of the Arab-

¹ *Echoes of Service: A Record of Labour for the Lord in Many Lands*, no. 289, July 1893, p. 157.

² Lary, P. and Wright, M., ‘Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi’, *African Historical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1971), p. 547.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Musambachime, M.C., *A Reconstructed Biography of an East African Trader: Nshimba of Kilwa Island in the South-West Corner of Lake Mweru, Zambia* (Unpublished Work, University of Zambia), pp. 19-21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3 and p. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3 and p. 5.

Swahili, they were linked by the Swahili language and culture and Islamic faith shared by all at the coastal settlements.⁷

It is also useful to briefly examine the indigenous African peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor, such as the Tabwa, Lungu, Mambwe and Fipa, so as to better understand the situation in the region during the nineteenth-century. These peoples were reliant upon subsistence agriculture and the exploitation of their local natural resources and had no mercantile ambitions of their own beyond trade with their immediate neighbours. They were also made up of a relatively rigid social hierarchy of noble and commoners.⁸

However, with regards to succession and descent, there are some key differences between these peoples. The Fipa possessed a system of hereditary paramounts but appointed sub-chiefs, consequently succession rarely caused an issue in their lands. The Lungu, Mambwe and Tabwa on the other hand, possessed entirely hereditary chiefly systems, meaning that their traditions of succession were far more important.⁹ Whilst the majority of the peoples of the region were patrilineal, in that descent followed the male line, the Tabwa were matrilineal, as were the royal clan of the Lungu. This leads to confusion abounding during periods of interregnum as various claimants to the throne pushed their ambitions. Matrilineal succession encourages polygamy on a large scale, as succession occurs through the female line and therefore it is important to know who the previous chief's chief wife was so as to be able to ascertain his successor. As often occurred, numerous different sons and claimants would maintain that their mother was the chief wife rather than their opponents and this naturally led to conflict and rivalry.¹⁰ This became even more confused if the paramount had brothers, and if they then also had sons. As can be seen in the Tabwa royal genealogy included in this thesis, it was not unusual for the paramountcy to move between various males of different family lines and this was something that was particularly influential when the Arab-Swahili arrived in the Corridor.

⁷ Musambachime, Nshimba of Kilwa Island, p. 15.

⁸ Brelsford, W.V., *The Tribes of Northern Rhodesia* (The Government Printer, Lusaka, 1956), p. 65.

⁹ Willis, R.G., *East Central Africa Part XV: The Fipa and Related Peoples of South-West Tanzania and North-East Zambia* (International African Institute, London, 1966), p. x.

¹⁰ Brelsford, *Tribes of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 66.

According to R.G. Willis, what linked all the groups of the region was a pattern of concentrated settlements and shared communal values, with membership of the village community emphasised. Therefore, these groups were naturally quite populous and sociable, attracting both slave raiders and coastal traders.¹¹ In addition, they all shared similar Bemba-based languages and had mutually recognisable cultures, which meant the boundaries and borders between the various peoples were by no means distinct or finalised.¹² This made political control more often a case of the most powerful chief in the region holding precedence, although some villages were traditionally associated with a particular paramount.

A final important linguistic point that must be made in this section regards some of the terminology that will be used throughout this thesis. Many of the African peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor were of Bantu origins and therefore so were the roots of their languages. A particular nuance of Bantu languages is the use of prefixes to change the meaning of the word. For example, an individual member of the Tabwa ethnicity would be called a Tabwa, whereas when referring to the Tabwa as an entire people the “ba-“ or “wa-“ prefix would be added so that it became “BaTabwa”. Whilst this appears rarely in this thesis, a particularly important prefix that will be used extensively is the prefix “u-“ or “i-“ to denote the country belonging to the people in question. For example, “Itabwa” is the home country of the Tabwa people, whilst “Ulungu” is the home of the Lungu and “Ufipa” the home of the Fipa. Whilst these can change slightly dependent upon the ethnicity of the speaker, in this thesis the basic linguistic rules shown above will be used as standard.¹³

Primary and Secondary Sources

As has already been touched upon above, the sources for this thesis are somewhat disparate, with very few covering the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in any great detail. Despite this, an assessment of the relevant secondary literature is essential in understanding how historians have viewed the region and, particularly, how they have viewed the long-distance trade and its violent reverberations.

¹¹ Willis, *The Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. xi.

¹² Willis, *The Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. 18, 30, 42 and 67.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

In charting the history of the coastal traders in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor, this thesis will principally rely upon historical records, such as the Foreign Office correspondence from the officials of the British Central African Protectorate and the *Echoes of Service*, the in-house journal of the missionaries of the Plymouth Brethren. It will also use various travelogues and published diaries of the numerous European observers who travelled through East-Central Africa in the middle to late decades of the nineteenth-century. These individuals include such famous names as David Livingstone, Richard Burton and Joseph Thomson, all of whom wrote extensively of their times spent in the Central African interior.

Explorer's journals are a particularly vital source in the study of pre-colonial African history as they are often some of the only written eye-witness sources available. However, it is important to be wary of the inherent bias contained within many of these diaries, travelogues and journals as they are very much products of the era in which they were written. Not only are they often chauvinistic and racist towards both the Africans and Arab-Swahili encountered, but they are also very much influenced by the audience the author was writing for.

For example, Livingstone, Alfred Swann and Edward Coode Hore were all committed opponents of the slave trade and, therefore, present the Arab-Swahili in generally a very poor light, regardless of the individual's actual involvement in the slave trade.¹⁴ Whereas, Burton's expedition was financed by the Royal Geographical Society and in his journals he appeared far less concerned with the moral issues of the long-distance trade and more interested in the potential "exportable produce" of East-Central Africa.¹⁵ Lionel Decle was an important nineteenth-century European observer, for he was employed by the French government, one of the few colonial powers without territorial interests in and around Mweru-Tanganyika, but, as a

¹⁴ Livingstone, D. [Waller, H. (ed.)], *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa. From Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-Five to his Death, Continued by a Narrative of his Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from his Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1875), vol. 1 + 2, Swann, A.J. (with Johnston H.H.), *Fighting the Slave-Hunters in Central Africa: A Record of Twenty-Six Years of Travel and Adventure Round the Great Lakes and of the Overthrow of Tip-Pu-Tib, Rimaliza and Other Great Slave Traders* (J.B. Lippincott Co./Seeley and Co. Ltd., Philadelphia/London, 1910) and Hore, E.C., *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa (2nd Ed.)* (Edward Stanford, London, 1892).

¹⁵ Burton, R.F., *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration* (Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, London, 1860), vol. 1, p. 15.

naturalised British citizen, was always positive and supportive regarding British colonial efforts in Central Africa.¹⁶

In addition, this thesis will engage extensively with the large body of secondary historical research that has been published regarding the events and peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika during the nineteenth-century. Whilst the sources described here will be examined in greater detail below, several vital secondary sources must be mentioned to highlight their importance in understanding the Arab-Swahili involvement in the African interior in this period. These sources are: Lary and Wright's 1971 article regarding "Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia"; Andrew Roberts' article presenting his edited remarks of the colonially gathered "History of Abdullah ibn Suliman" from 1967; Andrew Roberts' 1973 monograph *A History of the Bemba*, Christopher St John's chapter on *Kazembe*, the Arab-Swahili and the Corridor from Richard Gray and David Birmingham's book from 1970 on pre-colonial African trade; and Mwelwa Musambachime's unpublished essay on the history of Nshimba of Kilwa Island.¹⁷

Lary and Wright's article-length study of Arab-Swahili traders in Northern Zambia and Malawi is among the few historical works specifically concerned with the subject of this thesis. It forms a foundation for this work and provides an essential starting point. Whilst necessarily brief and analytically underdeveloped, Lary and Wright's piece makes several important assertions that link together the three main protagonists of this thesis: the African peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor; the Arab-Swahili; and the European colonialists. The article states that activities of coastal traders must be considered alongside European exploration and that geopolitical history and commercial geography were closely intertwined in the region.¹⁸ This perspective is vital to avoid overtly Eurocentric explanations to the Arab-Swahili infiltration into the centre of the African continent. Lary and Wright are particularly successful at reminding the historian that the Arab-Swahili traders did not

¹⁶ Declé, L. (with Stanley, H.M.), *Three Years in Savage Africa* (Methuen and Co., London, 1898).

¹⁷ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', Roberts, A.D., 'The History of Abdullah ibn Suliman', *African Social Research*, 4 (December 1967), Roberts, A.D., *A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and change in the north-eastern Zambia before 1900* (Longman, London, 1973), St John, C., 'Kazembe and the Tanganyika-Nyasa Corridor, 1880-1890', in Birmingham, D. and Gray, R. (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press, 1970) and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*.

¹⁸ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 547.

operate as a cohesive force. Rather, they often consisted of relatively small caravans led by individual traders, each of whom ventured into the African interior with only tentative support from fellow traders in the region.

The article is similarly insightful in charting the changes in Arab-Swahili/African political relationships. According to Lary and Wright, the switch from a policy of neutrality to one of active, and often violent, involvement in African internal affairs coincided with the arrival of Tippu Tip in Mweru-Tanganyika in the 1860s. This argument will be elaborated upon in the first chapter of this thesis, which is devoted to the early history of the coastal traders in the interior and how they came to dominate both the economy and politics of Mweru-Tanganyika by the second half of the nineteenth-century.¹⁹

A central aim of this thesis is to update the work of Lary and Wright and provide a more rounded history of the Arab-Swahili in the Corridor than they were able to offer in their short article. This thesis supplements their work by providing a fuller discussion of both the economics of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade and the commodities involved, and also of the patterns of violence that accompanied the arrival of coastal traders in the interior.

Andrew Roberts' introduction to his edition of the colonially collected "History of Abdullah ibn Suliman", almost unique as a non-European testimony describing the activities of coastal traders in Mweru-Tanganyika, is also of fundamental importance.²⁰ Roberts' notes are especially useful when presenting the situation that the Europeans found in Mweru-Tanganyika upon their arrival and in describing the process by which the Arab-Swahili stranglehold on the region was broken.²¹

The "History of Abdullah" presents a full and accurate history of the trader Abdullah ibn Suliman. This provides an excellent case study of a leading coastal trader and his response to the arrival of European colonial institutions in a land that had been largely under his heel in previous decades. In Abdullah's case, it shows how some of the Arab-Swahili were able to ingratiate themselves into the ranks of the British

¹⁹ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', pp. 551-556.

²⁰ Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 241.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

colonial administration and act as chiefs of the villages they had previously taken control over when they had first arrived in the region.²²

Andrew Roberts also wrote *A History of the Bemba*, another essential piece of historical research that informed the writing of this thesis. In his book, Roberts largely focusses on the interactions between the Arab-Swahili traders and African political elites in southern Mweru-Tanganyika. It was particularly helpful in exemplifying a relationship of cooperation between an African people, namely the Bemba, and the coastal traders in the second half of the nineteenth-century, when the majority of Arab-Swahili activity was violent or politically intrusive. The Bemba and Arab-Swahili were almost entirely able to avoid conflict and, instead, maintained a mutually beneficial commercial relationship, whereby the coastal traders received the slaves and ivory they desired and the Bemba received firearms so as to maintain their military advantage over their neighbours and rivals.

This last point was particularly important in informing the debate over the importance of firearms in Central Africa in the nineteenth-century that is presented in Chapter 3. Roberts himself is sceptical of the importance of guns militarily for the Bemba during this period, but he also suggests that the growing supply of them in Ubemba meant that they inevitably became a part of Bemba society. This is an important cultural side of the firearms debate that is often overlooked by western historians who assume firearms are limited to having militaristic importance alone.

The fourth piece of secondary research that proved invaluable in the completion of this thesis was St John's chapter in *Pre-Colonial African Trade*. St John provided the basis for the second chapter of the thesis with an extensive amount of information on the economy of Mweru-Tanganyika, particularly its involvement in commercial networks of exchange, be they the pre-existing regional trade routes or the later Arab-Swahili run long-distance trade.²³

St John's discussion of regional trade remains relevant in the modern historiography. Besides describing at some length the locally-produced commodities exchanged by the peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika, St John's work highlights the fact that the interconnectedness of African peoples predated the inception of the continent-

²² Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 265.

²³ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', pp. 206-211.

spanning long-distance trade routes. He suggests that the lack of direct contact between two given African peoples should not be taken to imply that the communities in question were not indirectly connected through the regional trade networks that saw such essential items as iron and salt move between different locales.²⁴

This idea was essential in understanding that the Arab-Swahili did not introduce commerce to East-Central Africa and, in fact, found regularly-used regional networks of exchange already in existence and exploited these pre-existing routes for their own gain. They were able to connect with mercantile African peoples such as the Nyamwezi who helped them to extend the reach of the long-distance trade without initially having to penetrate all the way to the centre of the African continent. In addition, this partnership allowed them to infiltrate African polities and chiefdoms economically through the trading networks that the Africans themselves had originally established. An example of this is the Nyamwezi ivory caravan route that reached *Kazembe* in the first decades of the nineteenth-century. With a trade in ivory already relatively longstanding, the Arab-Swahili were able to use this same route to the Eastern Lunda paramount and gradually monopolise the trade, offering cheaper trade goods than the Nyamwezi were able to afford, pushing out the African merchants.

The final secondary source that inspired this thesis is the unpublished study of the trader Nshimba of Kilwa Island, by Musambachime. This work provided a second case study, after Robert's of Abdullah, of a leading coastal trader in Mweru-Tanganyika and his reaction to the arrival of the European colonialists, in this case the C.F.S., in the region previously dominated by him and his men. Musambachime's work was essential in exploring the military confrontations between coastal traders and European powers and how some Arab-Swahili fought on in the hope of carving out their own independent merchant principalities based upon their old tactics of raiding for slaves and ivory.²⁵

In addition, Musambachime's work provides an insight into the world of the Arab-Swahili caravans and the *ruga-ruga*. Chapter 3 will discuss how the most trusted and

²⁴ Musambachime, Nshimba of Kilwa Island, p. 210.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

loyal servants of the coastal traders would sometimes be chosen to lead caravans for their masters and it was not unheard of for these men to then break off and form their own caravans and groups of *ruga-ruga*, with which to raid and trade in East-Central Africa. Nshimba of Kilwa Island is one such trader, having originally been brought to Zanzibar as a slave and entrusted with the running of caravans for his Zanzibari master. Therefore, this biography shows the process by which slaves within Arab-Swahili society had the opportunity for personal advancement and could even become arguably amongst the most feared Arab-Swahili traders in the whole Mweru-Tanganyika region.²⁶

²⁶ Musambachime, Nshimba of Kilwa Island, p. 11.

1. “The Work of Plunder Begins”²⁷ – The Early History of Arab-Swahili Traders in Mweru-Tanganyika

This chapter will lay the foundations for the rest of this thesis and will examine the “When?”, “Where?” and “Who?” of Arab-Swahili long-distance trade in the East African interior during its initial period. It will also establish an accurate chronology of the activities of the most prominent coastal traders, from their first forays into the interior in the early 1800s, up until the 1870s and the arrival of European representatives.

The key protagonists of the Arab-Swahili trade will be discussed, as well as their main areas of operation and periods of activity. Particular reference will be made to Hamed bin Mohammed el-Murjebi, more commonly known as Tippu Tip, and his relatives and henchmen of the el-Murjebi Arab-Swahili clan. François Bontinck and Tippu Tip himself both give the impression of this group as a longstanding family enterprise, something comparable to an Italo-American Mafia family. Tippu Tip’s father ran the trading business until he settled to “rule” and trade from the Arab-Swahili “city” of Tabora in modern-day Tanzania, after which Tippu Tip, his brothers, his uncles, various other male in-laws and a host of associates and henchmen took over the long-distance caravan trade into the interior of the continent.²⁸

The British explorer, Verney Lovett Cameron was amongst the many that were impressed by the el-Murjebi clan traders and following his initial meeting with Tippu Tip described thus; “He was a good looking man, and the greatest dandy I had seen amongst the traders. And, notwithstanding his being perfectly black, he was a thorough Arab, for curiously enough the admixture of Negro blood had not rendered him less of an Arab in his ideas and manners”. He also wrote that Tippu Tip and his

²⁷ Burton, R.F., *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration* (Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, London, 1860), vol. 1, p. 26.

²⁸ Bontinck, F. (trans.), *L’autobiographie de Hamed ben Mohammed el-Murjebi Tippu Tip (ca. 1840-1905)* (Académie royale des Sciences d’Outre-Mer, Brussels, 1974), pp. 21-22.

father were “two of the richest and most influential of the travelling Zanzibar merchants”.²⁹

During the 1860s and 1870s, these traders held such power and influence over the chiefs, people and land of the region that it would not be out of place to call them the overlords of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor, having subdued leading local paramount chiefs and kings such as the Nsamamas of the Tabwa and the Eastern Lunda rulers of *Kazembe*. The traders of the el-Murjebi clan effectively determined the direction and policy of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade in the African interior from the 1850s onwards, popularising new routes and destinations and pioneering new methods.

The Arab-Swahili activities between Lakes Mweru and Tanganyika will be examined in detail to chart the changing socio-economic and political landscape in the region and to better understand the situation that the European colonial administrators found upon their arrival in the last 15 years of the nineteenth century.

Of special concern to this chapter is the effort to periodise Arab-Swahili activities in the interior and to describe the factors that led such traders to acquire evermore significant politico-military leverage. Arab-Swahili traders were initially entirely reliant upon African chiefs for the continuation of trade and their own survival in the interior. However, by the second half of the nineteenth century they had become major power-brokers, capable of installing subservient puppet chiefs at will, slaving extensively with little real opposition, and demanding tribute of vast quantities of ivory, copper, salt or any local resource they desired. It was the increasingly exploitative nature of the Arab-Swahili *modus operandi* that led British explorer Burton to pen the following description in his travelogue, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*;

They [the Arab-Swahili traders] act less like traders than highwayman. By every petty art of mercantile diplomacy, now by force, then by fraud, by promises, or by bribes of cloth ... the work of plunder begins.³⁰

²⁹ Cameron, V.L., *Across Africa* (George Philip & Son, London, 1885), pp. 292-294.

³⁰ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 1, p. 26.

This chapter will illustrate the effects of the transformation in tactics employed by coastal traders and assess the significance of Tippu Tip and his associates in bringing about this change.

1.1 The Beginnings of Arab-Swahili Activities in the Interior, 1800-1830

In attempting to establish an accurate chronology of the early years of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade, the problem of obtaining reliable information and contemporary sources is immediately apparent. Before the arrival of such prominent explorers as Livingstone and Burton, written sources pertaining to the activities of coastal traders in the Mweru-Tanganyika region are few and far between. The Arab-Swahili traders themselves wrote almost nothing about this early period. The Zanzibari trader Said bin Habib commented in a narrative that was collected by, and presented to, the Bombay Geographical Society in 1860:

I have never written down anything I observed during my travels, because Arabs take no interest in the discovery of foreign countries, and do not care to hear of anything unconnected with the acquisition of riches.³¹

However, the records of Portuguese and Luso-African explorers and traders from both Mozambique and Angola assist in overcoming this lack of information. Two of the most important of these travelogues are; Burton's translation of the record of Dr Francisco José de Lacerda e Almeida's 1798 expedition to *Kazembe*; and Ian Cunnison's translation of Antonio Gamitto's diary of the 1831 Portuguese expedition to that same Eastern Lunda polity.³²

It is generally accepted by historians that there were trading links from the coast to *Kazembe*, and even to Katanga beyond that, in the first decades of the nineteenth

³¹ 'Narrative of Said Bin Habeeb, An Arab Inhabitant of Zanzibar', *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, XV (1860), p. 148.

³² Burton, R.F. [with Beadle, B.A. and Beke C.T. (trans. and eds.)], *The Lands of Cazembe: Lacerda's Journey to Cazembe in 1798 (Also Journey of the Pombeiros: P.J. Baptista and Amaro José, Across Africa from Angola to Tette on the Zambeze and A Résumé of the Journey of MM. Monteiro and Gamitto* (Royal Geographical Society, London, 1873) and Gamitto, A.C.P. [with Cunnison, I. (trans.)], *King Kazembe and the Marave, Cheva, Bisa, Bemba, Lunda, and Other Peoples of Southern Africa: Being the Diary of the Portuguese Expedition to that Potentate in the years 1831 and 1832* (Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, Centro de Estudo Políticos e Sociais, Lisbon, 1960), vol. 1 + 2.

century.³³ Abdul Sheriff, for example, suggests 1810 as the date that the kingdom of *Kazembe* began to shift its trade eastwards rather than south towards the Portuguese East African holdings.³⁴ However, it would be a mistake to assume that this very early trade bore any resemblance to the era of the great caravan routes and Arab-Swahili merchant princes of the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It is also crucial to understand that the coastal traders at the turn of the nineteenth century were not lone pioneers forging previously unheard of routes deep into the interior. In fact, they followed in the footsteps of a number of African trading peoples, relying heavily upon the pre-existing routes they discovered as they pushed the boundaries of the hinterland of Zanzibar further and further west across the continent.

Foremost amongst these peoples were the Nyamwezi of west-central Tanzania. Nyamwezi professional or semi-professional traders filled the void left by those groups who considered themselves rulers, agriculturalists or pastoralists and therefore above or unwilling to trade over long distances.³⁵ This idea is confirmed by St John when he claims that the indigenous groups of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor only had themselves to blame for not taking part in the long-distance trade from its very inception.³⁶

Thus, the Nyamwezi were some of the first key intermediaries in the chain that saw resources from the interior reaching the east coast of the African continent. For example, Lacerda suggested that in 1798 ivory from *Kazembe* was reaching the hands of coastal traders through African intermediaries. This would substantiate the idea of various mercantile groups representing different links in the chain that ran from the source in the interior to the coast. Thomas Q. Reefe and Jan Vansina both

³³ Lary, P. and Wright, M., 'Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi', *African Historical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1971), p. 551, Cunnison, I.G., 'Kazembe and the Arabs to 1870', in Brown, R. and Stokes, E. (eds.), *The Zambesian Past: Studies in Central African History* (Manchester University Press, 1966), pp. 226-227, St John, C., 'Kazembe and the Tanganyika-Nyasa Corridor, 1880-1890', in Birmingham, D. and Gray, R. (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 212 and Musambachime, M.C., *A Reconstructed Biography of an East African Trader: Nshimba of Kilwa Island in the South-West Corner of Lake Mweru, Zambia* (Unpublished Work, University of Zambia), p. 3.

³⁴ Sheriff, A., *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (James Currey, Oxford, 1987), p. 160 and Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, vol. 1, p. 204.

³⁵ Roberts, A.D., *A History of Zambia* (Heinemann, London, 1976), p. 110, Macola, G., *The Kingdom of Kazembe: History and Politics in North-eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950* (LIT Verlag, Hamburg, 2002), p. 129, Cunnison, I.G., *The Luapula Peoples of Northern Rhodesia: Custom & History in Tribal Politics* (Manchester University Press, 1959), p. 147 and St John, 'Kazembe and Corridor', p. 210.

³⁶ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 220.

claim that the African mercantile peoples were in contact and trading with *Kazembe* 50 years prior to Lacerda's expedition and had contact with Arab-Swahili traders throughout this period.³⁷

The Nyamwezi were a group of African peoples, by no means homogenous or following any one political leader, who had been trading iron, salt and agricultural produce regionally throughout the 1700s and "around 1800 ... seem to have discovered the rewards of long-distance trade".³⁸ They began to range further and further afield and trade new items, such as ivory and copper, for imported goods, such as guns and beads. However, Sheriff maintains that the Nyamwezi always focussed more upon ivory than slave trading throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century.³⁹

This involvement in the long-distance trade quickly developed beyond a simple means of wealth accumulation for the Nyamwezi, allowing young men to "escape the control of the elders" for the first time and it soon "became an accepted way of life and a source of male prestige" in Nyamwezi culture.⁴⁰ It would even significantly influence Nyamwezi politics. The traditional commercial monopolies of the Nyamwezi chiefs proved unenforceable, allowing anyone to begin trading. This formed what Sheriff calls "a new agrico-commercial bourgeoisie" of Nyamwezi long-distance traders.⁴¹ These Nyamwezi would cooperate with the first coastal traders penetrating the interior, selling the goods they had bought from the chiefs and kings of the interior to these Arab-Swahili traders who had ventured west beyond the littoral of the Swahili coast. These traders would then transport the resources east to the markets of the coast and Zanzibar. Andrew Roberts goes so far as to suggest that it

³⁷ Burton, *The Lands of Cazembe*, p. 37, Reeve, T.Q., *The Rainbow and The Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), p. 139 and Vansina, J., *Kingdoms of the Savannah: A History of Central African states until European occupation* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 235.

³⁸ Roberts, A.D., 'Nyamwezi Trade', in Birmingham, D. and Gray, R. (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 39 and Deutsch, J., 'Notes on the Rise of Slavery and Social Change in Unyamwezi', in Doyle, S. and Médard, H. (eds.), *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 2007), p. 79.

³⁹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 177.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 79-80.

⁴¹ *Ibid*., p.181.

had been the sight of Nyamwezi traders on the Swahili coast that had first inspired the Arab-Swahili to venture into the East African interior themselves.⁴²

Whether that was the true inspiration for the expansion in Arab-Swahili trade or not, the Nyamwezi and coastal traders soon found themselves inextricably linked. However, the era of peaceful trading cooperation between African chiefs, Arab-Swahili traders and their African intermediaries was not to last beyond the first few decades of the nineteenth century.

For the Nyamwezi, the long-distance trade proved both a blessing and a curse. The expansion of trade routes across Unyamwezi to Lake Tanganyika, and thence onwards north or south around the lake or westwards across it, saw them perfectly situated to exploit the trade as it passed through their homeland. However, the Arab-Swahili came to dictate commercial proceedings in Unyamwezi, which inevitably led to a domination of the political sphere as well. Using similar politico-military interventionist methods to those that would be employed by Tippu Tip in Itabwa in the 1860s, the Arab-Swahili expanded west away from the Swahili coast and into the heart of Unyamwezi.⁴³ By this point, the Nyamwezi were so involved in the long-distance trade that any attempt to oppose the coastal dominance of their land would certainly spell disaster for their own economic system, reliant as it was on commercial routes that crossed the region. Sheriff describes it thus;

The Nyamwezi were unable to apply the ultimate sanction, which would have cut their own throats equally with those of the coastal traders; the Nyamwezi merchant class were unable to destroy their twin brother.⁴⁴

The effect of this was to initiate what became a rapidly developing trend in Nyamwezi society, wherein young men hired themselves out as porters to coastal caravans heading westwards into the interior. Burton wrote that “The extension of traffic induced the country people (Nyamwezi) to enlist as porters”.⁴⁵ The Arab-Swahili traders were far more inclined to rely on professional Nyamwezi porters, in whose interest it was for the caravans to succeed, rather than slaves doubling as porters, who would take any opportunity to flee their captors and thus lose the

⁴² Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 49.

⁴³ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p.182.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.183.

⁴⁵ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 1, p. 295.

traders not only the slave but also the goods they were carrying. Tippu Tip claimed to only use slaves as porters because there was no “other means of transport for their goods instead of trusting to slaves”.⁴⁶

Porterage became such a central part of Nyamwezi culture that the majority of young men spent their free time during the year on *safari* (the Swahili word for a trading expedition) and it was considered a test of manhood and rite of passage.⁴⁷ It effectively gave the Nyamwezi two separate economies: a subsistence agriculture economy at home; and a wage economy when they hired themselves out as porters for the caravans. Jan-Georg Deutsch suggests porterage was one of the main sources of income for the Nyamwezi by the 1850s and claims that by the 1890s nearly one-third of all young male Nyamwezi were engaged as porters in the caravan trade.⁴⁸ Andrew Roberts claims that the existing relationship between coastal traders and Nyamwezi porters was made official in 1840 by order of the *Imam* of Zanzibar, with the Nyamwezi practically endorsed as the official porters for Arab-Swahili traders venturing into the East African interior.⁴⁹

1.2 The Arab-Swahili Rise to Prominence, 1830s-1850

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the bulk of eastern Lunda trade with the east coast had passed through the hands of African intermediaries, but by the 1830s, these middlemen found themselves increasingly marginalised as a result of the inception of a direct link between the eastern Lunda and Arab-Swahili long-distance operators. Drawing on Gamitto’s diary, Giacomo Macola asserts that by this time the Lunda of *Kazembe* were receiving all of their cloth from the coastal traders and sending almost all of their ivory and slaves east in return, despite having trading links through the *Mwata Yamvo* and Lunda heartland to the west coast of the continent. However, he also maintains that the number of traders actually present in the Mweru-Tanganyika region remained small throughout this period.⁵⁰

From this point onwards, the Arab-Swahili penetration of the Mweru-Tanganyika region only increased in pace. It was the 1840s that saw truly large numbers of

⁴⁶ Cameron, *Across Africa*, pp. 305-306.

⁴⁷ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 1, p. 295.

⁴⁸ Deutsch, ‘Slavery and Social Change’, p. 82 and Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 1, p. 66.

⁴⁹ Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, pp. 50-51.

⁵⁰ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 130.

coastal traders arrive in the region for the first time. Cunnison calls this the beginning of the “Arab era” and many of the first European explorers would later refer to traders they met during their travels who had spent the 1840s west of Tanganyika around *Kazembe* and Lake Mweru.⁵¹ In *Across Africa*, Verney Lovett Cameron recalled meeting a coastal trader by the name of Mohamed ibn Salib who had been west of the Arab-Swahili trading port of Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika’s eastern shoreline since 1842 as a “guest” in the kingdom of *Kazembe*.⁵²

In addition, the narrative of Said bin Habib dates his activities west of Tanganyika near Mweru and *Kazembe* to 1844 at the latest, certainly suggesting that the region had growing numbers of Arab-Swahili “visitors”. The date 1844 is based upon ibn Habib’s own assertion that he left for the African interior 16 years before the recording of his narrative. Therefore, if it was recorded in the same year as its publication in 1860, it would date the activities described as occurring during 1844. He also maintains that the name of the *Kazembe* when he visited was ‘Chareka’, a corruption of the name of *Kazembe* IV, Chibangu Keleka. Tippu Tip’s grandfather, Rajab bin Mohamed bin Said el-Murjebi, is known to have traded in the Tanganyika region so it is conceivable that ibn Habib was part of the increased number of Arab-Swahili traders visiting the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in the 1840s.⁵³

Lary and Wright describe this period as one in which the Arab-Swahili traders were turning sporadic contact with *Kazembe* and the Mweru-Tanganyika region into continuous trade. This continued into the second half of the nineteenth century, the “golden age” of Arab-Swahili trade in the East African interior.⁵⁴ However, despite their growing numbers and the increasing volume of their trade, coastal merchants did not have it all their own way. In the 1840s the regional African potentates still controlled their kingdoms unopposed and their wealth and support had yet to be dissolved to such a degree as to allow the traders to ignore their will and commandments.

For example, *Kazembe* IV Chibangu Keleka was able to detain traders almost at will during this period and keep them sequestered as “guests” at his capital, as attested

⁵¹ Cunnison, ‘Kazembe and the Arabs’, pp. 227-228.

⁵² Cameron, *Across Africa*, p. 181.

⁵³ ‘Narrative of Said Bin Habeeb’, p. 146 and Bontinck, *L’autobiographie de Tippu Tip*, p. 21.

⁵⁴ Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 551.

by Mohamed ibn Salib. Gamitto's expedition was effectively held captive at the *Kazembe's* capital from November 1831 until the summer of the following year. The explorer famously claimed during this period that "We are virtually prisoners". In addition, he reported meeting Arab-Swahili traders at the *Kazembe's* capital upon the expedition's arrival in 1831. According to these traders, they had been held at the capital for at least 6 months prior to the Portuguese arrival.⁵⁵ *Kazembe IV* was still able to limit who the coastal traders were able to trade with throughout his kingdom, maintaining his vital monopoly on the long-distance trade. According to Macola, the traders were banned from contact with regional governors and commoners, proving that the *Kazembes* still possessed a high level of authority during this period.⁵⁶ However, *Kazembe IV* was repeatedly unable to obtain enough ivory to trade with the Europeans, possibly suggesting his hold on the kingdom was not as solid as initially imagined.⁵⁷

Equally telling was the confrontation between an Arab-Swahili party and a powerful local Tabwa ruler, Nsama III Chipili Chipioka. Burton, who heard the story at Ujiji in 1858, reported that in 1841-1842 a coastal caravan had headed south down Lake Tanganyika to the Marungu Massif and Itabwa, on the lake's extreme south-western tip, and it had then fallen foul of local politics and the Tabwa paramount, Nsama. The 200-strong caravan, which comprised several coastal traders: Mohamed bin Salib, Suleiman bin Nassir, Abd el Al ibn Habib, Nasir bin Salim el-Harisi and Rashid bin Salim el-Harisi, had been drawn into fighting Nsama III by a local chief called Mtambara. They managed to kill Nsama's brother, only for a Tabwa counterattack to force the traders to flee, whereupon Nsama and his men seized the trader's goods and burnt their boats, leaving the surviving traders to head west to the lands of *Kazembe*.⁵⁸ Here they collected ivory and copper to build up the funds and number of porters required to return to the coast.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Cameron, *Across Africa*, p. 181, Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 551 and Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, vol. 2, p. 78 and p. 119.

⁵⁶ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 135.

⁵⁷ Gamitto, *King Kazembe*, vol. 2, p. 119.

⁵⁸ Roberts, A.D., *A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and change in the north-eastern Zambia before 1900* (Longman, London, 1973), p. 154.

⁵⁹ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, p. 127, Reefe, *The Rainbow and The Kings*, p. 163, St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 218, Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 122 and Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 160.

This story exemplifies the overall position of the Arab-Swahili traders in the Mweru-Tanganyika region in the 1840s. Whilst possessing firearms and representing an obvious potential ally for any disgruntled local chiefs, coastal traders as yet lacked the numbers, organisation and desire to fully embroil themselves in the political power-struggles of the interior. In addition, the aforementioned overlords and paramounts, such as Nsama III, were, during this period, still strong enough and possessed enough authority to violently oppose any trader willing to lock horns with them.

Christopher St John calls the mercantile economy of this period a market-oriented coast-to-coast trade and presents it as almost inevitable that the coastal trade would grow from these beginnings, with such well-developed internal trade networks already present. However, he does question whether the African commercial peoples, such as the Nyamwezi, alone would have been able to break through from regional trade to the long-distance trade without the external influence of traders from the Swahili coastline and Zanzibari islands.⁶⁰

1.3 The “Golden Age” of Arab-Swahili Trade in Mweru-Tanganyika

The second half of this chapter will examine the “Golden Age” of the Arab-Swahili trade in the Mweru-Tanganyika region, which roughly corresponded to the third quarter of the nineteenth century (1850-1880). Sheriff asserts that if this period is called the Arab-Swahili “Golden Age” then “the El Dorado of the Zanzibari traders by the 1850s had shifted to eastern Zaire”.⁶¹ There is almost unchallenged agreement throughout the historiography that this period was one of Arab-Swahili dominance and political pre-eminence in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor.⁶²

In comparison to the events of the preceding half century, this era was one of famous personalities, be they African warlords, Arab-Swahili traders or European explorers. Some of these prominent figures, such as Tippu Tip, Burton and Livingstone, have been briefly mentioned already and it is their actions that will dominate our narrative. However, this thesis is not a biography of any one of these individuals, and its aim is to use these personal trajectories to cast light on broader

⁶⁰ St John, ‘Kazembe and the Corridor’, p. 202.

⁶¹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 185.

⁶² Cunnison, ‘Kazembe and the Arabs’, p. 227.

regional developments. It is indeed vital to remember that these figures were the products of wider social groups and attitudes and that they acted very much in line with the thinking that had influenced them.

This later period differs from the earlier one in that sources of primary information are more numerous. The travelogues of European explorers, such as Burton, Livingstone, Cameron, Hore and Thomson, provide useful information on the activities of the coastal traders in the Mweru-Tanganyika region, particularly on Tippu Tip's conflict with the Tabwa of Nsama III, the Ujijian traders on Lake Tanganyika and Bemba - Arab-Swahili trading cooperation.⁶³ There also exist Arab-Swahili accounts of this period, including Tippu Tip's autobiography translated and annotated by François Bontinck, Andrew Roberts' "History of Abdullah ibn Suliman" and Musambachime's reconstructed biography of Nshimba of Kilwa Island (both largely sourced from Northern Rhodesian district notebooks which had recorded the original histories).⁶⁴ Finally, there is even an African source on this period in the Mweru-Tanganyika region written by *Mwata Kazembe XIV* Shadreck Chinyanta Nankula, assisted by Father E. Labrecque of the White Fathers. This relates the historical traditions of the Kingdom of *Kazembe* and provides their official royal viewpoint on the era's events.⁶⁵

Whilst the 1840s had seen Central African kings and paramounts in the region stand firm before the intruding traders, both Arab-Swahili and African, the 1850s would prove to be a very different decade. The most obvious change was the willingness of the traders to use violence to achieve their goals.

Msiri was from a long line of Nyamwezi traders who had been travelling from Unyanyembe and the east coast of the continent, west past *Kazembe* and the

⁶³ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 1 + 2, Burton, *The Lands of Cazembe*, Livingstone, D. [Waller, H. (ed.)], *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa. From Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-Five to his Death, Continued by a Narrative of his Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from his Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1875), vol. 1 + 2, Cameron, *Across Africa*, Hore, E.C., *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa* (2nd Ed.) (Edward Stanford, London, 1892) and Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes*, vol. 1 + 2.

⁶⁴ Bontinck, *L'autobiographie de Tippu Tip*, Roberts, 'History of Abdullah' and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*.

⁶⁵ Mwata Kazembe XIV [with Labrecque, E. and Cunnison, I.G. (trans.)] *Central Bantu Historical Texts II: Historical Traditions of the Eastern Lunda* (Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Lusaka, 1961).

Corridor and into the resource-rich region of Katanga.⁶⁶ Whilst slightly beyond the central focus of this thesis, Msiri's conquest of Katanga provides a perfect insight into the changing attitudes of the traders in the Interior. With his father, Kalasa-Muzwiri, having secured trade routes back east around Lake Tanganyika some years before, the way was open for Msiri to begin his career of vicious mercantile exploitation and enter the world of African political leadership.

Msiri and his Yeke, or as they were soon to be renamed - *Garenganze*, entered *Kazembe* heading west for Katanga around 1856. They collected ivory, copper, slaves and other resources *en route*, trading them with the Arab-Swahili coastal traders present in the Mweru-Tanganyika region.⁶⁷ Upon arrival in Katanga, Msiri set up slaving operations and began to seize ivory from local chiefs, exploiting the trade routes previously opened up by his forefathers. Macola suggests that due to his previous Arab-Swahili employment, Msiri and his men were extensively equipped with firearms and this was a particularly telling factor in the conquest of Katanga.⁶⁸ Following the death of the elderly Sanga chief, Msiri ascended to the throne of Katanga, as the chief's chosen successor according to *Mwata Kazembe XIV*, carving out his own conquest state during the rest of the decade.⁶⁹ These events constituted potentially the first instance of a trader involving himself in local politics to such an extent that he settled there permanently and seized political control.

In Mweru-Tanganyika, Arab-Swahili penetration continued much as it had throughout the 1840s. The number of coastal traders visiting the region was increasing apace but none had gone as far as Msiri and directly seized political control of the kingdoms, polities and villages they were trading with. Reeve, for example, mentions the trader Juma bin Salim wad Rakad (more famously known as Juma Merikani for the vast quantities of American-made cloth he traded) journeying southwards on Lake Tanganyika from Ujiji to Itabwa, where he stayed to trade for at least the next decade. Vansina writes of two other traders who crossed Lake Tanganyika early in

⁶⁶ Macola, G., 'The Warlord's Guns: Firearms in the Political Economy of Msiri's Conquest State' (Unpublished Chapter, 2014), p. 1, Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 73, Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah* (1966), p. 227 and Cunnison, 'Kazembe and the Arabs', p. 229.

⁶⁷ Cunnison, 'Kazembe and the Arabs', p. 226, Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, p. 43, Macola, 'The Warlord's Guns', p. 2, Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah*, p. 228, Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 122, Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 57 and Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Historical Traditions*, p. 82.

⁶⁸ Macola, 'The Warlord's Guns', pp. 2-4.

⁶⁹ Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Historical Traditions*, p. 82.

the 1850s, Said bin Habib in 1850-52 and Mohamed ibn Saleh shortly after, and St John describes how the Fipa welcomed slave and ivory traders in 1857, possibly referring to Mohamed ibn Salib and Abd el Al ibn Habib who had been defeated by Nsama in the early 1840s but were still operating in the region.⁷⁰

Burton famously visited Unyanyembe, Ujiji and Lake Tanganyika in the late 1850s and commented particularly upon the rampant slave trade he found there. In a long passage he expounded on the situation caused by the long-distance trade throughout the 1850s;

The practice of slavery in East Africa, besides demoralising and brutalising the race, leads to the results which effectively bar increase of population and progress towards civilisation. These are commandos, or border wars, and intestine confusion ... A poor and powerful chief will not allow his neighbours to rest wealthier than himself; a quarrel soon found, the strong attacks the weaker, hunts and harries his cattle, burns his villages, carries off his subjects and sells them to the first passing caravan. The inhabitants of the land have thus become wolves to one another; their only ambition is to dispeople and destroy, and the blow thus dealt to a thinly populated country strikes at the very root of progress and prosperity.⁷¹

This encapsulates the chaos that the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade in the East African Interior was causing during the 1850s, despite the fact that trader numbers in the region were still growing. Burton was also particularly disdainful of the Arab-Swahili traders that he found at Ujiji. He wrote that they were “a race so dependent for comfort and pleasure upon trade” and that “the rise in the price of slaves and ivory has compelled Arab merchants ... to push their explorations beyond the Tanganyika Lake”.⁷² It was this lure of greater profit that would draw evermore traders from the coast to the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and precipitated an era of intensive violence, turmoil and exploitation.

The 1860s and 1870s truly were the decades of the Arab-Swahili trader in the East African interior. Led by a new generation of young traders, the coastal operators

⁷⁰ Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah*, p. 235 and St John, ‘Kazembe and the Corridor’, p. 221.

⁷¹ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, pp. 309-310.

⁷² Burton, *Lake Regions* vol. 1, p. 295 and vol. 2, p. 52.

were able to penetrate and succeed in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor as never before. In many ways, this was as a result of the change in tactics pioneered by Tippu Tip and his family and associates of the el-Murjebi Arab-Swahili trader clan. Therefore, much of this section of the chapter will be devoted to the exploits of this “clique” of traders, including such figures as: Mohamed bin Masud al-Wardi or Kumba Kumba (Tippu Tip’s half-brother and partner); Hamed bin Mohamed bin Said or Bwana Nzige; Juma bin Sef bin Juma or Pembamoto; Salim bin Saleh-Nebhani (also all brothers of Tippu Tip); Bwana Nzige’s son Rashid bin Mohamed Said or Kamanga; Tippu Tip’s son, Mohamed bin Sef (who would later marry Bwana Nzige’s daughter); and several of Tippu Tip’s uncles, including Bushir bin Habib bin Habib Abdullah.⁷³ One of Tippu Tip’s most important and trusted associates was Abdullah ibn Suliman or Mundala/Selema, whose exploits will be examined in greater detail below.⁷⁴

What made the el-Murjebi clique’s change in trading tactics so radical in the history of the long-distance trade in Mweru-Tanganyika is that, for almost the first time; traders were actively engaging in violence against kings, paramounts, chiefs and headmen whom they had originally intended to do business with. However, this violence was not without purpose, and the Arab-Swahili traders quickly found that they could effectively dominate the local politics of reluctant trading partners by violently opposing the current leader, whilst supporting a rebel pretender. Once installed, this puppet ruler would rely entirely upon the foreign traders for his power and therefore could be forced from the throne, either by the coastal traders themselves with a new pretender to make chief or by the previously deposed king if he was still alive and still had support from chiefs within the kingdom. As several historians have pointed out, this allowed the traders to play kingmakers and simultaneously enhance their own political power and economic position in the region.⁷⁵ This exact *modus operandi* was used in Itabwa with the Tabwa Nsamamas

⁷³ Roberts, A.D., ‘The History of Abdullah ibn Suliman’, *African Social Research*, 4 (December 1967), p. 243 and Bontinck, *L’autobiographie de Tippu Tip*, pp. 21-22 and p. 49.

⁷⁴ Roberts, ‘History of Abdullah’, p. 243 and p. 249

⁷⁵ Macola, G., *Luba-Lunda States* (Unpublished work, University of Kent), p. 5 and Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, p. 155.

and in *Kazembe* with the *Mwata Kazembe*. Brelsford describes how the Arab-Swahili came to excel at this game of indirect political rule and influence.⁷⁶

This process was actually made even easier with the Tabwa, due to an institution present within their society called *Kisama*. *Kisama* occurs during the interregnum period following the death of a Tabwa paramount. During this time there is much confusion in the kingdom and all forms of theft, murder and kidnapping occur free of intervention from the traditional chiefly authorities. Obviously, a period such as this only aided the Arab-Swahili traders who were able to carry out any unsavoury acts they wished with the general chaos of *Kisama* to cover their tracks. They could then install their chosen successor to the throne and take the plaudits for helping to restore order to the kingdom in so doing.⁷⁷

A further break with the past was the practice of colonising and settling the lands where the traders were looking for ivory, slaves and other goods. Prior to the 1860s, traders had only stayed out of necessity or if they were unable to return to the coast. Tippu Tip certainly changed that practice, staying for as long as 12 years in the Interior on one of his expeditions.⁷⁸ Obviously, such long stays required bases to be built for the traders to operate from and Tippu Tip came to use Itabwa, under the control of his brother Kumba Kumba and later Abdullah ibn Suliman, as what was effectively a depot for storing both supplies and the ivory and other resources that the el-Murjebi traders would be returning with to the Swahili coast and Zanzibari islands.

Having covered the key 'structural' changes overseen by Tippu Tip and his associates, it is now essential to continue with the chronology of events and discuss Tippu Tip's first expeditions into the Interior. It was Tippu Tip's second incursion between 1863 and 1869 that inaugurated the set of new practices summarised above. His conflict with Nsama III Chipili Chipioka in Itabwa marked an unmistakable break from the ideas of old and was the harbinger of things to come.⁷⁹ Having left Dar es Salaam with a caravan of 120 armed men, Tippu Tip first

⁷⁶ Brelsford, W.V., *The Tribes of Northern Rhodesia* (The Government Printer, Lusaka, 1956), p. 102.

⁷⁷ Roberts, A.F., "'Comets Importing Change of Times and States': Ephemerae and Process among the Tabwa of Zaire', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1982), p. 714.

⁷⁸ Bontinck, *L'autobiographie de Tippu Tip*, p. 21.

⁷⁹ Macola, *Luba-Lunda States* p. 5, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 8, Reefe, *The Rainbow and The Kings*, p. 165, St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 219 and Brelsford, *Tribes of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 102.

headed inland to Mwamba Mutali, a great regional chief of the Bemba and second only in influence to *Chitimukulu* XXVII Mutale Chitapankwa, the Bemba paramount, himself.⁸⁰

In 1867 Tippu Tip intended to head north and trade in Itabwa, the realm of Nsama III. However, Mwamba warned him against the journey, reportedly saying;

Cependant les indigènes de chez Mwamba me déconseillèrent fortement ce voyage; ils desaient: “N’allez pas chez Samu; sans doute il a beaucoup d’ivoire, mais c’est un home perfide. Il a déjà massacré beaucoup d’Arabes, de même que des Besars et gens de la Côte.”⁸¹

Whether the Bemba chief was simply trying to keep the Arab-Swahili trading in Ubemba or whether he was actually warning them about Nsama and his potentially treacherous nature towards visiting traders, his advice was ignored and the traders had entered Itabwa by May of that year.⁸² What happened next is not entirely clear, although the undoubted result was full blown conflict between the Tabwa paramount and Tippu Tip. Lary and Wright present the most even-handed assessment of the events that led to violence.⁸³ Tippu Tip’s interpretation was that Nsama was waiting to trap and kill the traders, having lured them into his capital with promises of ivory to trade. On the other hand, Livingstone claimed that the whole incident was an accident.⁸⁴ Lary and Wright suggest a more logical middle ground of Nsama simply feeling threatened by a large band of armed men entering the capital of his kingdom.⁸⁵

According to Tippu Tip, Nsama’s warriors ambushed the traders upon their entry into the village, killing two of the Arab-Swahili and injuring Tippu Tip himself with two arrows. In reply, the Arab-Swahili killed a number of the Tabwa and put Nsama III to flight. Tippu Tip estimated over 200 Tabwa casualties in the first exchange, rising to over 1000 by the time the traders had gained control of the village, however Livingstone suggests the more modest figure of around 50 dead on each side.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 127.

⁸¹ Bontinck, *L’autobiographie de Tippu Tip*, p. 49.

⁸² Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. 1, pp. 208-209.

⁸³ Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 554.

⁸⁴ Livingstone, *The Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 218.

⁸⁵ Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 554.

⁸⁶ Bontinck, *L’autobiographie de Tippu Tip*, p. 51 and Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 218.

Tippu Tip's uncle, Bushir bin Habib bin Habib Abdullah, followed the Tabwa and defeated them several more times in the following days. These events sent shockwaves through the region as Livingstone famously reported.

The entire population of the country has received a shock from the conquest of Nsama, and their views of the comparative values of bows and arrows and guns have undergone a great change. Nsama was the Napoleon of these countries; no one could stand before him, hence the defeat of the invincible Nsama has caused a great panic ... He (Nsama III) has been a great conqueror in his time, and with bows and arrows was invincible. He is said to have destroyed many native traders from Tanganyika, but twenty Arab guns made him flee from his own stockade, and caused a great sensation in the country.⁸⁷

Nsama's downfall was no great victory for the Arab-Swahili, although they effectively took control of his lands. Despite the defeat, Nsama III kept his throne until his death in 1870 and Livingstone reported that, following the clash, few locals would trade with the coastal traders out of fear. Tippu Tip himself reported this reaction from local chiefs, writing;

Depuis que Samu avait été vaincu, tous les habitants de ces lieux me craignaient. Cela était dû au fait qu'auparavant aucun chef indigène n'était aussi puissant que Samu et Kazembe du Runda, lesquels avaient peur l'un de l'autre.⁸⁸

However, what Tippu Tip's victory did accomplish was to popularise the famous epithets of himself and his brother, Kumba Kumba. Both Tippu Tip which translates as "the gatherer of wealth" and Kumba Kumba meaning "the collector of people" were fitting titles for these individuals given their activities and notoriety in the region.⁸⁹

The succession crisis that enveloped Itabwa following Chipili Chipioka's death perfectly demonstrated the Arab-Swahili method of playing various successors off against one another. Kumba Kumba and Abdullah ibn Suliman had remained behind

⁸⁷ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 231 and p. 258.

⁸⁸ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, pp. 235-236 and p. 260. Bontinck, *L'autobiographie de Tippu Tip*, p. 57.

⁸⁹ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol.1, p. 230.

whilst Tippu Tip had headed onwards to Lake Mweru and beyond. The duo soon came into conflict with Nsama IV Katandula for supposedly joining an anti-Arab-Swahili alliance.⁹⁰ Katandula was swiftly killed and replaced with Nsama V Kafwimbi, Chipioka's original successor, whom Kumba Kumba had helped Katandula beat to get to the throne.⁹¹

Soon, though, Kafwimbi was threatened by the many potential successors and sons of the deceased Nsamas, including Chinama, Mukupa, Matipa, Mulenga and Mukupa Katandula, and called upon his Arab-Swahili allies to help.⁹² After another falling out and loss of their support, Nsama V Kafwimbi was killed and another succession dispute between Mulenga and Chimutwe developed. Mulenga was soon killed by Chimutwe's resurgent coastal allies and Chimutwe became Nsama VI.

From these somewhat convoluted political alliances and conflicts, it can be concluded that the Arab-Swahili in Mweru-Tanganyika supported a favourite successor to the Tabwa throne only as long as that individual remained their loyal ally and someone that they were able to manipulate. As soon as he attempted to turn against his coastal backers, the traders would abandon or dispose of that chief, only to replace him with another distant relative. Just as this was happening with rival pretenders to the throne of Itabwa, the coastal traders were also becoming increasingly involved in the politics of the eastern Lunda of *Kazembe*. As Cunnison writes "Kazembe was virtually ringed about by Arab and Nyamwezi traders and by the Yeke kingdom which was now well established". These traders included Tippu Tip in Itabwa, Said bin Habib at Mpweto, Hames Wodim Tagh in Ulungu and Funga Funga, Juma Merikani, Said bin Umala and Mohamed Bogharib all actually within the kingdom of *Kazembe*.⁹³

After fighting with the Yeke in the west, *Kazembe* VII Muonga Sunkutu decided to expel all Arab-Swahili from his kingdom in retaliation, the survivors fleeing to Pembamoto in Itabwa.⁹⁴ The Arab-Swahili were doubly convinced to start a conflict with *Kazembe*, as an eastern Lunda royal pretender, Lukwesa Mpanga, had been

⁹⁰ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 555.

⁹¹ Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 244 and Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 155.

⁹² Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, pp. 155-157.

⁹³ Cunnison, 'Kazembe and the Arabs', pp. 233-234

⁹⁴ Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Historical Traditions*, p. 88, Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah*, p. 228 and Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, pp. 331-332.

hiding in Itabwa throughout the 1860s, searching out support to claim the throne.⁹⁵ The combination of these two factors eventually led in 1872 to an Arab-Swahili attack on *Kazembe* and Muonga, led by Pembamoto, Kumba Kumba and Hamed bin Mohamed bin Juma and the incumbent *Kazembe* was soundly defeated by the coastal traders.⁹⁶

Lukwesa Mpanga was finally installed nearly 11 years after being deposed by Muonga, but has since been vilified in *Kazembe's* history for his associations with the Arab-Swahili traders and for bringing in new patterns of political behaviour based upon foreign intervention in internal affairs, according to Macola.⁹⁷ Shortly after, both Pembamoto and Kumba Kumba's son, Chifulukuta, were killed in battles to secure the throne that they had just won for Lukwesa.⁹⁸

These events marked the beginning of the end for uncontested African rule in the Mweru-Tanganyika region. Macola perfectly describes a situation that many African paramounts, who relied upon tribute from their under-chiefs, found themselves in during this period, in his assessment of the effect of the burgeoning coastal trade on the polity of *Kazembe*. The *Kazembes* needed to maintain a monopoly upon the long-distance trade in the kingdom so as to control the redistributive networks of trade goods that flowed outwards from the capital to regional governors, and thence onwards to village chiefs and their people. In addition, they relied upon ivory as tribute, which would be paid to the capital in return for the trade goods that the *Kazembe* distributed. However, if individual chiefs and smaller headmen were able to trade directly with the coastal traders, they would no longer provide ivory in tribute to the *Kazembe* and would no longer need access to the kingdom's redistributive networks for trade goods.⁹⁹

This meant that the *Kazembes* lost control over their own kingdom, as there was little benefit to be gained by chiefs who had previously paid tribute, when they could simply trade their ivory directly with the traders themselves and receive trade goods in return. This is but one example of the breakdown in the traditional tributary systems of the larger Central African polities and highlights the indirect socio-political

⁹⁵ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 139.

⁹⁶ Bontinck, *L'autobiographie de ... Tippu Tip*, p. 77 and Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 144.

⁹⁷ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 137.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-134.

effects that the long-distance trade had on powerful kings and chiefs. Put simply, the coastal traders were themselves replacing the rulers of these polities in the minds of local chiefs and headmen by providing trade goods in return for ivory and slaves, much in the same way as the old systems had done but without installing themselves as overlords of these people. This is the genesis of Arab-Swahili traders wielding very real political power in the Interior and replacing the traditional figures of authority, either with themselves or with puppet rulers.¹⁰⁰

These interventions in the internal affairs of African polities and kingdoms suggest that in the 1860s and 1870s the Arab-Swahili traders operating in Mweru-Tanganyika had indeed changed their modus operandi and that their new strategy owed much to the example set by Tippu Tip and his immediate followers. Livingstone described the scene he found in Itabwa in 1872, some 5 years after the original Arab-Swahili takeover. He wrote:

Already the large district of Itabwa had tacitly allowed itself to be put under the harrow by this ruffianly Zanzibar Arab. Blackmail is levied in all directions, and the petty chiefs, although really under tribute to Nsama are sagacious enough to keep on with the powers that be.¹⁰¹

The diplomacy and peaceful methods that had characterised the actions of pioneering coastal traders had been rendered obsolete by Tippu Tip. Greater ambition, political involvement and reliance on military strength became the distinguishing traits of the traders of Tippu Tip's generation. Geddie wrote an apt summary of this changed modus operandi. He describes how the methods of Tippu Tip and his el-Murjebi clan associates had become the norm by the time explorers such as Cameron and Livingstone arrived in the Mweru-Tanganyika region.

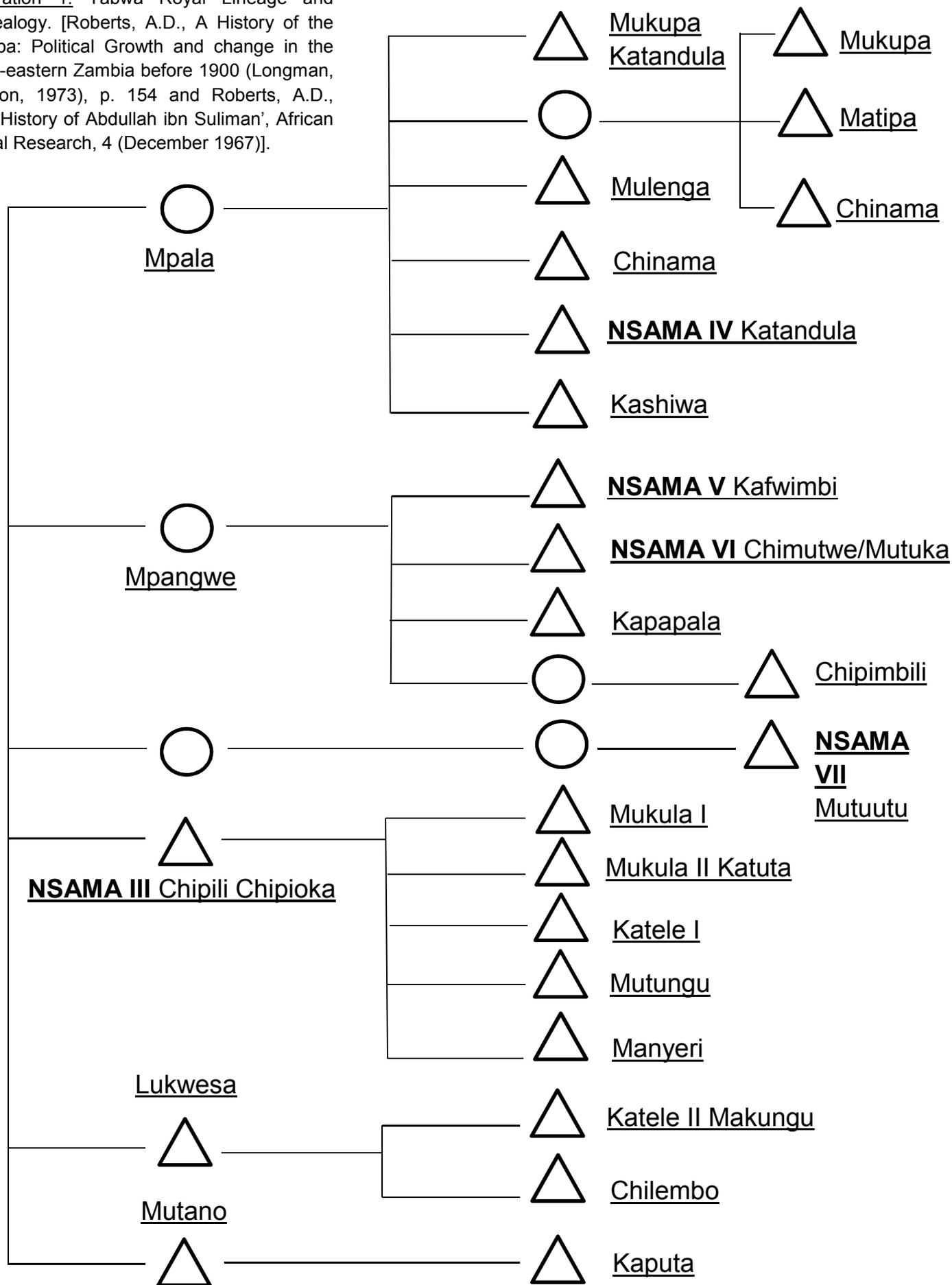
The slave-traders found it the easiest task imaginable to set the tribes at each other's throats. These ruffians having gained complete ascendancy with their fire-arms, sided first with one party and then with another, and when the combatants were sufficiently weak they all fell an easy prey.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Macola, *Luba-Lunda States*, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 2, p. 332.

¹⁰² Geddie, J., *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Record of Modern Discovery* (T. Nelson and Sons, London, 1892), p. 6.

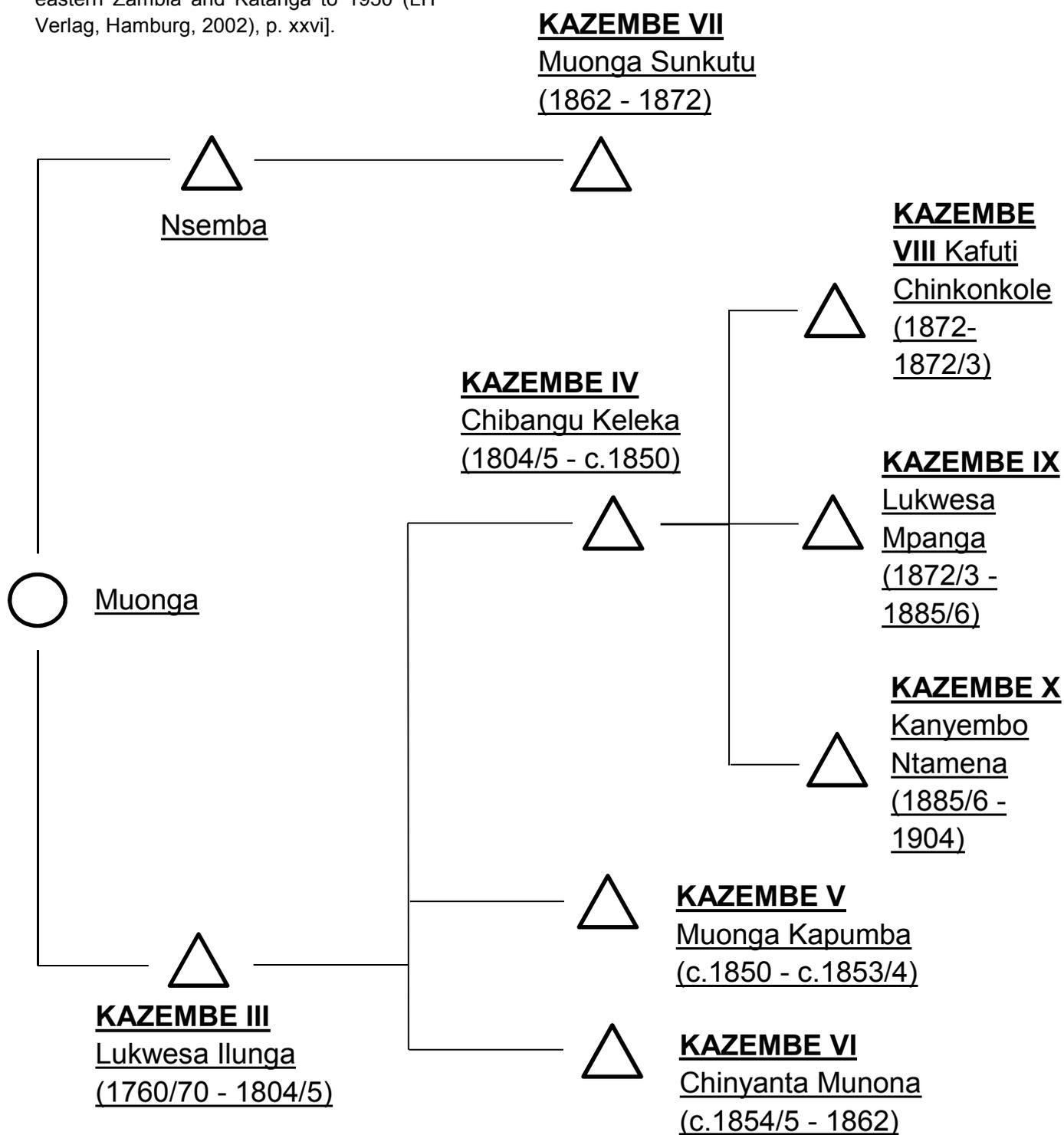
Illustration 1: Tabwa Royal Lineage and Genealogy. [Roberts, A.D., A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and change in the north-eastern Zambia before 1900 (Longman, London, 1973), p. 154 and Roberts, A.D., 'The History of Abdullah ibn Suliman', African Social Research, 4 (December 1967)].



△ = Male

○ = Female

Illustration 2: Kazembe Royal Lineage and Genealogy. Macola, G., The Kingdom of Kazembe: History and Politics in North-eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950 (LIT Verlag, Hamburg, 2002), p. xxvij].



△ = Male

○ = Female

2. “What do you wish to buy, if not slaves or ivory?”¹⁰³ – Slavery, Ivory and the Economy of the Long-Distance Trade

Whilst the previous chapter established an accurate chronology of the pre-colonial Arab-Swahili trade in the East African interior, this chapter will focus primarily on the economic dimension of the long-distance trade, and the items and resources around which it revolved. These commodities ranged from slaves, ivory and cloth, to minerals such as copper and iron, salt and agricultural produce including millet, rice, maize, cotton and tobacco. However, it is not simply the items of trade that require discussion, and therefore this chapter will also describe the caravan trade and the effects it had upon the regions and peoples who came into contact with it.

It is vital to remember that the long-distance trade to Mweru-Tanganyika did not operate in isolation and that the coastal traders who reached the west of Lake Tanganyika passed through a variety of regions during their treks into the interior. The peoples of these countries were deeply involved with the passing traders and the Arab-Swahili often used the villages and chiefs they visited to restock their caravans with food and other supplies. This brought almost every group of people between Zanzibar and Katanga into contact with the long-distance trade to some degree, even though not all of them were directly involved in slave raiding or portage. The British explorer and anti-slavery crusader, Alfred Swann, described this process as “octopus-like”, grasping “every small unprotected village community”.¹⁰⁴

This chapter will be subdivided into two main sections. The opening section will discuss, in detail, the main commodities of the long-distance trade. Such

¹⁰³ Livingstone, D. [Waller, H. (ed.)], *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa. From Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-Five to his Death, Continued by a Narrative of his Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from his Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1875), vol.1, p. 197.

¹⁰⁴ Swann, A.J. (with Johnston H.H.), *Fighting the Slave-Hunters in Central Africa: A Record of Twenty-Six Years of Travel and Adventure Round the Great Lakes and of the Overthrow of Tip-Pu-Tib, Rimaliza and Other Great Slave Traders* (J.B. Lippincott Co./Seeley and Co. Ltd., Philadelphia/London, 1910), p. 62.

commodities are best understood as falling into two categories. Firstly, the two central Arab-Swahili exports leaving the interior, namely ivory and slaves will be discussed. Second, the other commercial items of the long-distance trade will be examined. These ranged from the trade goods taken into the interior by the Arab-Swahili traders, such as cloth and beads, to the locally-produced items and resources that had been traded from the time of the earliest regional networks of exchange and continued to be traded following the entrance of East Africa into the world economy.

The final section of this chapter will focus upon the wider impact of the trade on the region as a whole, assessing both the positive and negative effects of the long-distance trade upon Mweru-Tanganyika and the peoples who lived there. Andrew Roberts suggested that, “in order to sustain long-distance trade, older patterns of production and exchange were transformed”.¹⁰⁵ The chapter will therefore end with a discussion of the transformation of the traditional methods of exchange in East-Central Africa.

2.1 Ivory and Slaves and the Long-Distance Trade

Most historians who have written about the East African long-distance trade agree that ivory and slaves were the most highly sought-after items of trade among coastal traders in the interior.¹⁰⁶ Cameron even went so far as to say that in the mid-1870s, the time of his trans-continental Central Africa journey, only slaves, ivory and, to a lesser extent, rubber were exported overseas in large quantities.¹⁰⁷ Sheriff insists that it is essential that the two commodities be examined in conjunction with one another. Indeed, so deeply intertwined were the slave trade and the “legitimate trade” in ivory that the absence of one threatened the continuing success of the

¹⁰⁵ Roberts, A.D., ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, in Birmingham, D. and Gray, R. (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 39, p. 52.

¹⁰⁶ Alpers, E.A., *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Pattern of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975); Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 100 and p. 139; Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 189 and p. 206; Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’ (1970), p. 57; Musambachime, M.C., *A Reconstructed Biography of an East African Trader: Nshimba of Kilwa Island in the South-West Corner of Lake Mweru, Zambia* (Unpublished Work, University of Zambia), p. 6; Sheriff, A., *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (James Currey, Oxford, 1987), p. 176; Deutsch, J., ‘Notes on the Rise of Slavery and Social Change in Unyamwezi’, in Doyle, S. and Médard, H. (eds.), *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 2007), p. 79 and Moore, R.J., ‘Industry and Trade on the Shores of Lake Mweru’, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 10, no. 2 (April 1937), p. 137.

¹⁰⁷ Cameron, V.L., *Across Africa* (George Philip & Son, London, 1885), p. 527.

other.¹⁰⁸ Their interconnectedness was no less obvious to contemporary observers, as the title of this chapter shows. In February 1867, upon his arrival at the village of the Bemba chief, Mwamba, Livingstone was asked what items he was interested in trading. Surprised to hear that the explorer refused to be involved in trading ivory or slaves, the Bemba chief had retorted: “What do you wish to buy, if not slaves or ivory?”¹⁰⁹

Before embarking on the combined analysis of these two commercial items, a fundamental idea must be established. Slaves must be understood as part of what Pier Larson calls “a spectrum of trade” and as just another “article of commerce and not an exception in world history”.¹¹⁰ By this, Larson suggests that it is important not to approach the slave trade from a moral standpoint. On the contrary, the economics of the era must be appraised objectively, treating a slave as one would treat a tusk of ivory or a load of salt. After all, this was how the slave traders themselves viewed slaves, as the explorer Richard Burton understood well. Referring to the stockpiling of export goods in the depots of coastal in the interior, he reported matter-of-factly that “slaves were collected like ivory”.¹¹¹

It is undeniably difficult to remain emotionally detached from a trade that saw hundreds of thousands of innocent people captured and sold as items of commerce, but this was the reality of the Arab-Swahili long-distance economy. Coastal traders were not slave raiding and trading out of a personal hatred towards black Africans or due to the tenets of their Islamic faith; they were businessmen, unrestrained by moral and religious considerations when it came to supplying a particular demand in the market that would lead to substantial profits if they were able to supply it.¹¹² Ivory and slaves were simply two of these in-demand items, both relatively easily available in the African interior to the coastal traders. As Declé put it, ‘the Arab’ may not be ‘perfect’, but ‘in business matters he is no fool’.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁰⁹ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 197.

¹¹⁰ Larson, P.M., ‘African Slave Trades in Global Perspective’, in Parker, J. and Richard, R. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 10.

¹¹¹ Burton, R.F., *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A Picture of Exploration* (Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, London, 1860), vol. 2, p. 309.

¹¹² Page, M.E., ‘Tippu Tip and the Arab “Defense” of the East African Slave Trade’, *Etudes d’Histoire Africaine*, VI (U.N.A.Z.A., Kinshasa, 1974), p. 117.

¹¹³ Declé, L. (with Stanley, H.M.), *Three Years in Savage Africa* (Methuen and Co., London, 1898), p. 521.

Many contemporary European observers were insistent upon the evils of the Arab-Swahili as vicious and unscrupulous slave traders, devoted to the cause of depopulating the African interior. For example, Alfred Swann wrote of the Arabs,

These lazy, slave-depraved people were, I felt positive, many degrees below the primitive, half-savage tribes of the Interior, amongst whom we were about to live. Mohammedanism had done little for them except to make them consider the Creator their special Protector, and the vast multitudes of the natives their legitimate prey, ranking them about on an equality with the animals of the forest.¹¹⁴

The German explorer and colonial administrator, Hermann von Wissmann also held strong anti-Arab-Swahili sentiments and wrote that,

(The Arab-Swahili focus on) obtaining as many slaves as possible, never caring what will ultimately become of the devastated countries. The fault of originating these outrages lies unquestionably with the Arab, for only his initiative made it possible to advance, to subjugate, and to depopulate more and more.¹¹⁵

However, it is now widely believed by historians that the primary focus of coastal caravans was ivory.¹¹⁶ Historically, ivory in much of the Central African interior was an item of little commercial value or interest. It was gathered by chiefs and village headmen as symbols of nobility through tribute from their subordinates and also as a by-product of hunting for food, but it never really entered the regional trade networks that existed before the arrival of coastal traders.¹¹⁷ This was soon to change as a result of the rapidly growing demand for ivory in India, Europe and America throughout the early 1800s for use in all manner of items, from billiard balls to piano

¹¹⁴ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁵ Von Wissmann, H. (Bergmann, M.J.A. trans.), *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa from the Congo to the Zambesi in the Years 1886 and 1887* (trans. Bergmann M.J.A.) (Chatto and Windus, London, 1891), p. 184.

¹¹⁶ Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', pp. 108-109.

¹¹⁷ Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 234 and Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 176. Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 47 and Deutsch, 'Slavery and Social', p. 79.

keys.¹¹⁸ This demand also spurred Arab-Swahili traders to venture west into the African interior for the first time, according to Sheriff and Edward A. Alpers.¹¹⁹

Arguably, the emerging demand for large quantities of ivory was the catalyst for Arab-Swahili trade in the East African interior during the early nineteenth century. Larson argues that “Ivory became the main driver of export commerce, not slaves.”¹²⁰ Zanzibar was soon known for exporting the best ivory in the world and the ivory was quickly categorised into three different types, based upon quality and destination.¹²¹ The best and most expensive ivory was sent east to India, whilst that of middling quality went to Europe and America. Finally, the remaining tusks of the poorest quality were sold to any destination where there was a market for them. Alpers claimed that over 50% of all ivory exports were reaching the Indian subcontinent by the middle of the century.¹²²

In addition, he suggested that as much as 250,000 lbs of ivory left Zanzibar in 1856 and double that amount the following year.¹²³ Such was the demand for ivory exports that, according to Musambachime, a relay system of Nyamwezi caravans developed, shuttling ivory from the interior to the coast, before returning west for another load.¹²⁴

However, this rampant commercial exploitation of Central Africa’s animal resources soon led to the rapid decline of elephant herds in the hinterland of Zanzibar and a corresponding expansion of Arab-Swahili operations westwards to such regions where ivory still remained plentiful. In the late 1850s, Burton reported a shift by coastal traders to the west of Lake Tanganyika as the elephant herds on the eastern shore dwindled due to extensive hunting.¹²⁵ A decade later, Livingstone explained the Arab-Swahili inroads into Manyema by pointing out the wealth of the eastern Congo when compared to the territory further east. This shift was also driven by ever-increasing prices at Zanzibar, as well as the aforementioned declining elephant populations nearer to the coast.¹²⁶ Cameron also noticed the steadily declining

¹¹⁸ Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 47 and Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, p. 356.

¹¹⁹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 156 and Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 63.

¹²⁰ Larson, ‘African Slave Trades’, p. 11.

¹²¹ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, pp. 350-351.

¹²² Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 87.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹²⁴ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 24.

¹²⁵ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, pp. 51-52 and p. 353.

¹²⁶ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 2, p. 18, p. 24 and pp. 89-90.

elephant herds during his trip through Ufipa and Ulungu on Lake Tanganyika's south-east and southern shoreline in the early 1870s.¹²⁷

By the time of Thomson's expedition in the final years of the 1870s, ivory stocks were reaching dangerously low levels between the Swahili coast and Lake Tanganyika.

The fact that the trade in ivory ... now almost entirely depends on the distant countries to which these routes lead, suggests a woeful tale of destruction. Twenty years ago the countries between Tanganyika and the coast were rich in ivory ... Now these countries are completely despoiled ... hardly a tusk is to be got."¹²⁸

Thomson did not see a single elephant during the eighteen months he spent in Central Africa on this trip. The areas that Livingstone had visited a decade before were empty of the elephants that once thrived there. The ivory trade was still ongoing, but, according to Thomson, had "certainly reached its turning-point. Each year less ivory will be got".¹²⁹

Drawing on the observations of Thomson and others, Andrew Roberts believes that the Tanganyikan elephant population had plummeted by 1879. At the same time, prices at the coast were skyrocketing, encouraging the trade even further. Despite these ravages, the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor, and the Mweru-wa-Ntipa swamp system in particular, remained a rich source of ivory, with elephants able to remain undisturbed in the more impenetrable areas of the marshland.¹³⁰

Harry Johnston, first Commissioner of the B.C.A.P., was also concerned by the depopulation of elephants in the regions he was responsible for. In 1894, he wrote at length on the subject to the Foreign Secretary Archibald Primrose, Earl of Rosebery. While he conceded that ivory remained very common in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor, he was still set upon preserving the elephant and rhinoceros although not

¹²⁷ Cameron, *Across Africa*, p. 530.

¹²⁸ Thomson, J., *To the Central African Lakes and Back* (Sampson Low, Manston, Searle & Rivington, London, 1881), vol. 2, pp. 17-18.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 285-286.

¹³⁰ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 197, Lary, P. and Wright, M., 'Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi', *African Historical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1971), p. 553 and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 29.

the hippopotamus.¹³¹ However, this was not an act of early altruistic conservation and, as with most actions taken by Johnston, it had an ulterior motive. Johnston aimed to regulate the ivory trade so as to continue it for as long as possible, maximising the benefit to the British Empire and the B.C.A.P., with himself as Commissioner. He wrote as much in the aforementioned report to the Earl of Rosebery,

(If) guns and gunpowder are) kept from the natives, especially from the Arabs, and Europeans are only allowed to shoot elephants by taking out a license, the elephant is likely to exist with us for all time, and yet to supply a sufficiency of ivory for the trade.¹³²

Having examined the key structural aspects of the ivory trade, the next step is to analyse the Arab-Swahili slave trade. The link between ivory and slaves as commercial items has already been established, but the reason behind this will now be explored. Those European observers who were not blind to all trade except that of slaves, frequently noted that ivory was the focus of the Arab-Swahili traders in the interior and that slaves were a subsidiary item. Declé, for one, wrote that “The Arab is mainly an ivory merchant, and this is the only business that really pays him”; in a similar vein, Livingstone had remarked that “Those Arabs who despair of ivory invest their remaining beads and cloth in slaves”.¹³³

However, the slave trade cannot be simply relegated to a subordinate position without due examination. Whilst the acquisition of ivory was undoubtedly the main concern of coastal traders, slaves were not simply taken or bought on impulse or because a trader still had trade goods left over from the stock he had brought with him. There was a definite demand for slaves at the coast and they served a vital role in many caravans returning from the interior. As Cameron explains, the entire long-distance trade was based upon portage.¹³⁴ Without dedicated porters, a coastal trader, no matter how distinguished, was not able to transport the commodities he had bought, collected and hunted, back to the coast. Slaves often fulfilled this role, carrying ivory to the coast where, upon their arrival, both they and their cargo were

¹³¹ “Harry Johnston to Lord Rosebery, Report on the First Three Years of the Existence of the British Central African Protectorate”, 31st March 1894, National Archives of the United Kingdom Kew, FO2/66, pp. 228-229.

¹³² “Johnston to Rosebery”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 229.

¹³³ Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 520 and Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 232.

¹³⁴ Cameron, *Across Africa* (1885), p. 529.

sold. *The Echoes of Service* described with disgust how, despite ivory maintaining its position as the chief export of Central Africa, thousands of people were still being enslaved to carry the tusks to the coast. This solved the persistent and difficult issue of logistics for those coastal traders who did not wish to hire professional porters, such as the Nyamwezi.¹³⁵ Johnston, too, understood the close relationship that existed between slaves and portage: the Arab-Swahili's 'one idea', he wrote to the Earl of Rosebery was 'to amass enough property in slaves or ivory or both – the former to carry the latter.'¹³⁶

Thomson was equally convinced that "the traffic in slaves alone would never repay the traders, the main value of the slaves simply being that they act as unpaid carriers".¹³⁷

The obvious link between ivory and slaves as commercial items in the long-distance trade presented here shows the impracticality for traders of attempting to focus on either item to the exclusion of the other. Ivory profits could be maximised by using slave portage rather than paying professional porters, and slave trading without the sale of ivory was commercially unviable for traders and far too risky, especially once the Europeans had established some bridgeheads in the interior. Somewhat jingoistically, Burton suggested that the only way in which the ivory trade would become profitable in the absence of the slave trade would be through a great improvement in logistics and "conveyance" that only Europeans could bring.¹³⁸

The development of the East-Central African slave trade itself must now be examined, including both the more famous Indian Ocean/East Coast oceanic slave trade and the thoroughly under examined internal slave trade within the African continent itself. Sheriff claims that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the slave trade in East-Central Africa was very small.¹³⁹ However, he also shows that the trade then grew rapidly in size and severity, to the point that the British felt it necessary to pressurise the Sultan of Zanzibar, Barghash bin Said Al-Busaid, to sign

¹³⁵ *Echoes of Service: A Record of Labour for the Lord in Many Lands*, no. 206, February 1889, p. 57 and Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', p. 111.

¹³⁶ "Johnston to Rosebery", 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 241.

¹³⁷ Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes*, vol. 2, p. 274.

¹³⁸ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, p. 354.

¹³⁹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 35.

a joint treaty in 1873 aimed at suppressing the slave trade on the east coast.¹⁴⁰ Musambachime suggests that the ever-increasing demand for slaves, and constantly improving organisation of the Arab-Swahili caravans, created a cycle of demand, in turn encouraging an improved supply. According to Musambachime, the corresponding increase in supply then fuelled even greater demand.¹⁴¹

Alpers agrees with both Sheriff's and Musambachime's assessments, suggesting that the rapid growth of the eastern slave trade took place in the first half of the nineteenth century, partly in response to attempts to curb the trade elsewhere on the African continent.

The Indian Ocean slave trade resembled the infamous Atlantic slave trade in that it removed African slaves from the continent by ship, destined for European colonies or other territories around the world. Slaves were exported from the East African coast to the European-owned islands of the Indian Ocean, such as the Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar, or even around the Cape of Good Hope and west across the Atlantic to South America to the Portuguese colonies in Brazil, for example.

Whilst still being somewhat marginalised by historians in comparison to its Atlantic counterpart, the Indian Ocean slave trade has been studied far more than the second type of slave trade in East Africa, namely the internal slave trade. This latter trade saw African slaves never leave the continent; instead they were employed on plantations and farms on Zanzibar or the Swahili coast and owned by the same Arab-Swahili traders who had brought them to the coast from their homes in the interior in the first place.¹⁴²

In addition, it is important to remember that the Arab-Swahili were not the only slave trading peoples in Central Africa during the nineteenth-century. As its name suggests, the internal slave trade was a socio-economic institution of the continent's interior and saw many African peoples intimately involved in it. By no means did every slave in the internal trade pass into the hands of the Arab-Swahili traders to be put to work in the plantations of the coast. In fact, many simply passed between the

¹⁴⁰ Deutsch, 'Slavery and Social Change', p. 84, Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 61 and Roberts, A.F., *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013), p. 17.

¹⁴¹ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 14.

¹⁴² Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', pp. 111-112.

different peoples of the African interior, often with very limited or no Arab-Swahili involvement at all.

A prime example of this is related by Lary and Wright when they describe how famines struck several of the peoples around Lake Tanganyika during the second half of the nineteenth-century. The Lungu were one such group who resorted to trading their own people as slaves for food from their more productive neighbours, the Fipa. Somewhat ironically, the Fipa were importing slaves to work their extensive gardens and farms producing the food that they then exported out of their country. This led to the intriguing scenario where enslaved Lungu were put to work cultivating food for their new masters, only for the fruits of their labour to be sold back to their own villages and chiefs, in exchange for more slaves to work Fipa lands.¹⁴³ This is but one example of the internal slave trade between indigenous African peoples, free of coastal trader interference, which occurred across the African continent in the nineteenth-century.

The internal slave trade also saw slaves used as what effectively amounted to currency by the Arab-Swahili traders. The traders would act as middle-men, using slaves as an item of exchange with African peoples, such as the Fipa, who sought to import slaves rather than export them. In addition, slaves were used as payment to those employed as porters or guards in the coastal trader's long-distance caravans.¹⁴⁴ These mercenary dependents, such as the Nyamwezi, existed through a combination of subsistence agriculture for half the year and paid employment by the Arab-Swahili traders for the other half. Therefore, owning slaves allowed commercially-minded African peoples to work their lands at home, whilst still being available for the wage labour of portage for the coastal traders.¹⁴⁵

As Melvin Page suggests, slaves were an economic institution for the Arab-Swahili in this region of Central Africa. However, from the examples of the internal slave trade detailed above, slaves seemed to occupy a similar position in the societies of the African peoples of the interior as in that of the traders.¹⁴⁶ Slaves were the original labour-saving device, allowing their owners to maximise their profits. It was far

¹⁴³ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 553.

¹⁴⁴ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, pp. 62-63.

¹⁴⁵ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 63.

¹⁴⁶ Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', p. 117.

cheaper to use slaves rather than to employ labourers to carry out menial tasks and subsistence agriculture.

In order to remedy the marginalisation of the internal slave trade of Africa, it is necessary to examine the estimates of the number of slaves suggested to have been involved. Also, it is essential not to disregard a whole facet of the African slave trade simply because it is less visible in historical records. As Larson writes 'The internal slave trade of Africa was the oldest and likely the greatest in magnitude.'¹⁴⁷

Therefore, approaching the internal trade numerically, Larson suggests that when the nineteenth century alone is considered, the Indian Ocean trade was almost six times smaller than the internal trade in terms of the numbers of slaves involved. He estimates that some 1.1 million slaves were exported from the East Coast between 1801 and 1901, but nearly 6.2 million were involved in the internal trade across this same period.¹⁴⁸ Alpers' estimate that every year 15,000 slaves were entering the plantation economy on Zanzibar alone, not including the plantations and farms on neighbouring islands such as Pemba or the Swahili coast, demonstrates the enormity in scale of the internal slave trade in East Africa.¹⁴⁹

Whilst having largely escaped the attention of modern historians, coeval observers were alive to the importance of the internal slave trade. Declé was one such nineteenth-century commentator who made the distinction between the two forms of the slave trade in East Africa. He wrote,

On this question of slavery we must make a fundamental distinction. Slave-raiding by Arab adventurers in the interior is one thing, while domestic slavery in the settled districts, where the Arabs have made themselves permanent homes, is quite another.¹⁵⁰

Despite his decidedly modern approach to understanding the differing forms of the slave trade, Declé seriously underestimated the size of the "domestic" trade. He expounded "where I differ from the Anti-Slavery Society is that I do not for a moment believe that the slave trade in the interior is of anything like the proportions they

¹⁴⁷ Larson, 'African Slave Trades', pp. 2-3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 4 and 6.

¹⁴⁹ Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves*, p. 239.

¹⁵⁰ Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 519.

allege it to be.”¹⁵¹ However, Declé’s position is easily explained by his own estimates of slave export as he travelled throughout Central Africa in the early 1890s. He suggested that nearly 2 million slaves had been taken by Arab-Swahili traders in the 18 months that had preceded his arrival, with another 500,000 killed in the process.¹⁵² Declé assumed that these slaves were intended for export in the oceanic slave trade; yet, it was more likely, particularly when the European anti-slavery operations in East Africa in the 1880s and 1890s are considered, that they were destined for coastal plantations belonging to Arab-Swahili traders, having never left the continent. Declé concluded by making the point that trying to end the internal slave trade would prove considerably more difficult than ending the oceanic slave trades.¹⁵³

Slaves from the Mweru-Tanganyika region certainly entered both forms of the slave trade.¹⁵⁴ Johnston claimed that the B.C.A.P. and British Sphere of Influence contributed “the main supply of slaves to the East Coast traders” and that “the part of Africa most frequented by slavers was the eastern half of British Central Africa”.¹⁵⁵ Johnston suggested that only 10% of the slaves annually leaving the protectorate were destined for overseas plantations and, of these, 80% were sent to Madagascar. Only 2% of exported slaves reached the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf by his reckoning and he proudly proclaimed that “the trans-marine slave trade is nearly at an end from Eastern and Southern Central Africa”.¹⁵⁶ However, Johnston later tempered this statement of success by confirming the existence and scale of the internal slave trade in East Africa.

By far the bulk of the slaves obtained from Central Africa south of the equator are destined for the coast plantations. The centre of the continent is being depopulated for the benefit of the East Coast region. The numerous Arabs and Swahili planters require docile manual labour for their increasingly profitable plantations, and naturally obtain this, not from the sturdy and semi-

¹⁵¹ Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 519.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 519-520.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 522.

¹⁵⁴ Larson, ‘African Slave Trades’, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ “Johnston to Rosebery”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 238.

¹⁵⁶ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 22 and “Johnston to Rosebery”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 239.

civilised tribes around them, but from the more docile savages of the Interior.¹⁵⁷

Having discussed the scale of the East African slave trade, both external and internal in the nineteenth century, other facets of the slave trade must be explored: including the origins of the slaves, the methods of enslavement and the work that the slaves were intended for.

The Arab-Swahili slave traders were far more prominent in regions whose peoples could only offer disorganised and weaker opposition. Peoples with less centralised governments and little military organisation were preyed upon extensively. It is because of this that areas such as the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor were particularly badly affected. The region around Lake Tanganyika was what Thomson called “the centre of the slave trade”; while Burton chillingly claimed that “all the tribes from the eastern equatorial coast to Ujiji and the regions lying westward of the Tanganyika Lake may be called slave-races”.¹⁵⁸ Larson sums up the geographical extent of the trade well when he describes the heaviest concentrations of slaves coming from both shores of Lake Tanganyika, the Lualaba River basin in the Congo and the Nyamwezi highlands near Tabora.¹⁵⁹

The slave trade was particularly prevalent and damaging in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor due to the political landscape of the region during this period. As already discussed in the introduction of this thesis, the Corridor contained a number of different peoples and cultures forced into close proximity with one another due to the physical geography of the region. The lowland lakeshores of Mweru and Tanganyika and the interlaying swamp system had great agricultural potential as well as large animal populations and deposits of salt and iron. This naturally drew many subsistence peoples to the region, such as the Tabwa, Lungu and Mambwe, but also attracted more militaristic groups, such as the Bemba of the highland plateaus to the south, who survived primarily by raiding neighbouring groups and conquering the more fertile lands of others. Naturally, the Corridor was a prime target for these raiders.

¹⁵⁷ “Johnston to Rosebery”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 240.

¹⁵⁸ Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes*, vol. 2, p. 9 and Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, p. 356.

¹⁵⁹ Larson, ‘African Slave Trades’, p. 6.

It was into this system of constant rivalry and warfare that the Arab-Swahili penetrated, bringing with them their desire for slaves.¹⁶⁰ Not only was the region comparatively densely populated compared to the highlands closer to the east coast, but it was also riven with internal discord between neighbouring peoples, clans and villages and surrounded by strong, predatory, militaristic groups who could provide a supply of the commodities that the coastal traders had come in search of. Therefore, it is clear to see why the slave trade was so destructive in Mweru-Tanganyika. The region lacked strong, central leadership to repel the intruders; its population was scattered and renowned for its civil wars and conflicts, and, with the advent of coastal penetration, it had several marauding groups who were intent upon depopulating it for their own economic gain.

Slaves were generally obtained through violent means, such as kidnapping and raiding.¹⁶¹ These resulted in huge collateral damage and Decle's estimate of half a million dead for 2 million enslaved may not be far from the truth during a period that saw particularly violent raids in the interior. Local wars were also a good source of slaves for the Arab-Swahili and traders often involved themselves in these conflicts with the aim of enslaving large numbers of captives. Therefore, in general, slaves were prisoners, either from wars or raiding. However, criminals, debtors and even sometimes particularly unlucky political opponents or thwarted pretenders found themselves sold to passing coastal caravans as slaves.

The Arab-Swahili were not the sole protagonists of the slave trade and many other groups sold slaves that they had gathered either in war or through raids of their own. The Nyamwezi and Bemba were two such groups, although they were certainly not the only African peoples involved in the trade.¹⁶² Johnston described the situation in the B.C.A.P. thus,

There are some tribes which are almost entirely victims of the slave trade, there are other tribes which enslave their neighbours and sell their own

¹⁶⁰ Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', p. 114.

¹⁶¹ Deutsch, 'Slavery and Social Change', p. 88, Larson, 'African Slave Trades', p. 13 and Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 198.

¹⁶² "Johnston to Rosebery", 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 239.

superfluous people as well, and there are certain races ... with whom it had almost become a national profession to sell the people of other tribes.¹⁶³

Johnston claimed that the Arab-Swahili were the “backbone of the slave trade” and, without them, groups such as the Nyamwezi would “soon be reduced to a condition of law and order”. History soon proved Johnston to be correct in these estimations, but the militant anti-slavery operations by European colonial powers probably proved more of a disincentive to such groups than the simple absence of Arab-Swahili traders in the interior did.¹⁶⁴ However, it would be a mistake to assume that just because the Arab-Swahili slave trade was nearing its end, that the end of the internal exchange of slaves in the region was also nigh.

Finally, the uses to which the slaves were put once they reached their destinations will be discussed. Those slaves involved in the Indian Ocean slave trade in the nineteenth-century found themselves used in a very similar way to the Atlantic slaves. They were sold to plantations and made to work to produce exotic goods for the markets of the western world. On the Indian Ocean islands these plantations grew spices and herbs, such as cinnamon and vanilla, whilst in the Americas the dominant crops were sugar and cotton. In the interior of Africa a similar fate awaited the slaves. Agricultural and plantation work on the coast and Zanzibari islands consumed most of the slaves of the internal trade, as they required vast amounts of labour. The crops grown would often be very similar to those on the Indian Ocean islands, but could also include fruit, sugar, papyrus, rice and cereal crops. These were grown, harvested and then sold at the coastal markets, providing far safer and more guaranteed profits for retired long-distance Arab-Swahili traders than the caravan trips of their youth.¹⁶⁵

Slaves also found themselves doing any number of menial jobs around Arab-Swahili settlements that a poor freeman may very well have been expected to do. Musambachime examines these professions closely in his biography of the trader Nshimba and attempts to provide an exhaustive list of them. Slaves were employed in the fishing industry that was prominent on the coast and Zanzibari islands, either

¹⁶³ “Johnston to Rosebery”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, pp. 238-239.

¹⁶⁴ “Johnston to Rosebery”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 239.

¹⁶⁵ Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 59, Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 17, Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes*, vol. 2, p. 272, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 14 and pp. 21-22 and Page, ‘Tippu Tip and the Arab “Defense”’, pp. 111-112.

fishing or working in the associated processing industries, readying the fish for market. Some were put to work as smiths, masons, jewellers and miners if they already had experience of such industries from their past lives.¹⁶⁶ Many Mambwe and Nyamwezi slaves found themselves in this role, with both peoples being regionally renowned for their ironworking. However, it was not just laborious physical tasks that slaves were used for by their Arab-Swahili masters. Some were weavers, tailors and cobblers, others were musicians and entertainers, and the most trusted slaves were even found in the medical profession or as religious teachers (*mullahs*) to the Muslim faithful of the Swahili coast. Generally, the more skilled a slave the better they were treated, being given better food and treatment in return for their services and their embracement of the coastal culture.¹⁶⁷

Many of the slaves effectively became a human currency in the Arab-Swahili world, especially by the second half of the nineteenth century. Andrew Roberts suggests that many were simply held for future transactions, passing from one master to another as deals were brokered between different trading interests amongst the coastal traders.¹⁶⁸ Some were even used for military purposes and armed and used as slave-soldiers in caravans that ventured into the interior.¹⁶⁹ These *ruga-ruga* stood the best chance of self-improvement and promotion of any slave as they sometimes found themselves chosen to lead caravans if they had performed admirably and proved themselves trustworthy on past expeditions. Many of the famous coastal traders that will be examined below began their careers as lowly *ruga-ruga*.

In summary, it is clear that the growth and development of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade from small, relatively weak, individual traders to the thousands-strong caravans of Tippu Tip and his contemporaries, in turn drove the trade in both ivory and slaves. The stimulation of new commodities, as mercantilism itself grows, is a pattern that punctuates global trade throughout history and it was no different in East-Central Africa during the nineteenth-century. The demand for ivory and slaves encouraged greater penetration of the African interior by coastal traders, which in

¹⁶⁶ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁷ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 21 and Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', p. 112.

¹⁶⁸ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 60. Nshimba was one such slave who belonged to numerous masters across the Zanzibari islands and Swahili coast in his early life. Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*.

¹⁶⁹ Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', p. 112.

turn further stimulated the demand for the commodities that the Arab-Swahili were able to supply in increasing amounts. They were simply businessmen in a perfect position to exploit the in-demand resources of the interior to their own benefit and to the cost of the unfortunate peoples, animals and land of East-Central Africa.

2.2 Other Commodities of the Arab-Swahili Long-Distance Trade

Ivory and slaves were not the only commercial items of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade and, as Pier Larson suggests, were simply a “portion of Africa’s foreign trade ... (with the) domestic economies of Africa ... far more important in a quantitative sense”.¹⁷⁰ In other words, focussing on the main exports that were leaving the continent in the hands of the coastal traders must not be at the expense of the examination of internal African commerce. The Arab-Swahili trade was not bound to specific products; but rather driven solely by profit. Coastal traders were ready to supply any lucrative commercial demand and, therefore, many different items were traded by the Arab-Swahili, ranging from the cloth and beads that they brought from the coast, to natural resources such as salt and copper, that were produced and traded regionally long before the long-distance trade ever reached the countries of the deep interior of the African continent.

Sheriff claims that by 1875 the hinterland of Zanzibar stretched halfway across the African continent and that the penetration of traders into regions so far west was only possible thanks to the pre-existing regional networks of commercial exchange.¹⁷¹ These networks traded items that were very different to those desired by the world markets that the Arab-Swahili traders sought to supply.¹⁷² If this fact is combined with Sheriff’s estimate that 80% of all exports leaving Zanzibar during the nineteenth century came from the mainland, and many of these from deep within the interior of Central Africa, it is obvious that the coastal traders found themselves drawn into, and helped to expand, pre-existing local and regional commercial networks.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Larson, ‘African Slave Trades’, p. 13.

¹⁷¹ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 155.

¹⁷² Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 41.

¹⁷³ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 140.

This involvement provided a whole new dynamic to networks of exchange and the coastal traders helped to both expand the reach of these regional trade networks and to bring East-Central Africa into the global economy. In addition, the Arab-Swahili trade encouraged both production and commerce within Africa itself.¹⁷⁴ In other words, there was a synthesis between long-distance and local regional trade, with both acting to stimulate the other. Local produce was carried much further by the Arab-Swahili traders and local peoples benefited from the new customers that came in the form of these coastal caravans.¹⁷⁵ This is particularly apparent in the growth of industries based entirely upon supplying passing Arab-Swahili caravans with food and other necessary provisions.¹⁷⁶

Prior to its penetration by the Arab-Swahili, the regional trade networks of the Central Africa interior involved little in the way of professional organisation.¹⁷⁷ They relied heavily upon some of the most basic of all the natural resources found in Mweru-Tanganyika and elsewhere, such as salt, iron and copper. These were geographically dispersed throughout the region and, understandably, the peoples who possessed a ready supply of the resources traded them with those who lacked them. The arrival of the Arab-Swahili traders in the nineteenth century only encouraged and expanded these networks of exchange, and the coastal traders applied themselves enthusiastically to the business of trading the valuable natural resources of the region.

Salt was the most important of these commercial natural resources in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and had been so since the earliest days of human settlement between these two Central African lakes.¹⁷⁸ Both R.J. Moore and St John estimate that the regional salt trade properly began in the eighteenth-century, and it was well-established by 1800.¹⁷⁹ The essential nature of salt for subsistence farmers and

¹⁷⁴ Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, p. 247 and Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 100.

¹⁷⁵ Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 100 and p. 141.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁷⁷ St John, C., 'Kazembe and the Tanganyika-Nyasa Corridor, 1880-1890', in Birmingham, D. and Gray, R. (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 210-211.

¹⁷⁸ Gordon, D.M., *Nachituti's Gift: Economy, Society, and Environment in Central Africa* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2006), p. 88, Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 103, Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 43 and Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 101. Hore, E.C., *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa (2nd Ed.)* (Edward Stanford, London, 1892), p. 71, Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol.1, pp. 215-216, Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, pp. 211-212, Cameron, *Across Africa*, p. 324 and Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, p. 342.

¹⁷⁹ Moore, 'Industry and Trade', p. 138 and St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 210.

hunter-fishermen cannot be underestimated and, therefore, the trade was necessary for their continued existence. This trade resulted in the establishment of both direct and indirect connections between peoples of the region.¹⁸⁰

The sheer number of different peoples reliant upon salt in their everyday lives during this period shows the importance of both its production and trade. The Bwile of Lake Mweru and the Tabwa of the Corridor famously produced salt near Tshitope, Puta, Kalembe, Pende, Chiengi and Kaputa and sold it to traders from Katanga and the Coast.¹⁸¹ It was reaching the hands of Nyamwezi throughout the nineteenth century and is known to have entered Arab-Swahili circles as a commercial item by the 1830s.¹⁸² Salt from the Corridor reached the Bemba at Mporokoso and Kasama, the Mambwe, the Lungu, and the Aushi at Fort Rosebery.

It was even reportedly present as far away as Ujiji, Lake Nyasa and Lunda capitals to the west by the 1860s.¹⁸³ Livingstone himself had traded salt during his time in the region and Trivier and Giraud witnessed the Bemba-Nyamwezi trade in salt in the late 1880s.¹⁸⁴ In 1889, Trivier also reportedly saw the Arab-Swahili trader Teleka, who was based at Sumbu on the Tanganyikan shoreline, transporting an entire caravan's worth of salt to trade for slaves rather than the more usual cloth from the coast.¹⁸⁵ By 1894, Daniel Crawford of the Plymouth Brethren mission in Central Africa was convinced that the best salt in the region came from the salt pans of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and claimed that a porter carrying 40 lbs of Mweru salt could trade it with the African Lakes Company at Abercorn for 40 yards of calico cloth.¹⁸⁶ This quite clearly shows the commercial potential of salt, even into the final decade of the nineteenth century, and how it remained a central part of trade for

¹⁸⁰ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 210.

¹⁸¹ Moore, 'Industry and Trade', p. 138, Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, pp. 186-187, Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 102 and p. 145, Cancel, R., *Storytelling in Northern Zambia: Theory, Method, Practice and Other Necessary Fictions* (Open Book Publishers, Cambridge, 2013), p. 212 and p. 217 and "Alfred Sharpe to Harry Johnston", 17th December 1893, FO2/54, p. 19.

¹⁸² Moloney, J.A., *With Captain Stairs to Katanga: Slavery and subjugation in the Congo 1891-92* (Sampson Low, Manston & Co. Ltd, London, 1893), p. 51 and Gordon, *Nachituti's Gift*, p. 13.

¹⁸³ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 54, Macola, G., *The Kingdom of Kazembe: History and Politics in North-eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950* (LIT Verlag, Hamburg, 2002), p. 53 and "Alfred Sharpe to Harry Johnston", 17th December 1893, FO2/54, p. 19.

¹⁸⁴ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 224.

¹⁸⁵ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 208.

¹⁸⁶ Hanna, A.J., *The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia 1859-95*, (Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 20-23 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 310, May 1894, p. 127.

European companies even after the effective destruction of the Arab-Swahili presence in the interior.

Salt was particularly vital to the peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor as the land itself was not productive enough for subsistence agriculture alone. Despite groups such as the Tabwa best being described as agriculturalists, according to Giacomo Macola, Moore and St John, they relied upon the export of salt and other produce to buy crops and livestock and thus sustain themselves. They were “part-time specialists” according to St John, farming until the salt season (mid-June-November), when they produced the commodity whose exchange would sustain the village until the next salt season came around.¹⁸⁷ One bad year could see the village starve during the rainy season between January and March. Salt became gradually less desirable and more difficult to transport profitably, leading the Tabwa in particular to carry salt to the markets themselves.¹⁸⁸

It is obvious from this analysis of salt as a commercial item in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor that it was very important to everyone involved in its production and trade. It was an essential item for peoples throughout Central Africa who required it to store food effectively. Its geographic dispersal meant that networks of exchange naturally developed between peoples who enjoyed ready access to this all-important resource and people who did not. In Mweru-Tanganyika this network of exchange was assisted by the need for local peoples to import foodstuffs, their own land being relatively infertile. Later in the nineteenth century, the involvement of Arab-Swahili and European traders saw salt develop from a local item of exchange to one that travelled thousands of miles upon the backs of porters in the Arab-Swahili caravans.

Mineral ores, such as copper, iron and gold, and the items made from them were also very important commercial items in East-Central Africa during the nineteenth century. In many ways, these resources and their uses, both commercial and in everyday life, match the trajectory of salt, as described above. These resources were all essential for the peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika region and hugely desirable as items of trade for the Arab-Swahili and Europeans. They were also as geographically dispersed as salt, meaning that those with a supply of the mineral ores were able to

¹⁸⁷ St John, ‘Kazembe and the Corridor’, p. 211, Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 53 and Moore, ‘Industry and Trade’, p. 138.

¹⁸⁸ Moore, ‘Industry and Trade’, p. 146.

trade them, whilst simultaneously developing their metalworking skills, with those groups who did not possess the ores and yet still needed metal goods.

Iron is almost always mentioned in the same breath as salt when contemporary European commentators and modern-day African historians write of the commercial items of Mweru-Tanganyika.¹⁸⁹ It was similar in many regards, being geographically dispersed in several main deposits and being a resource essential to all the peoples of the region, whether they had a readily available supply or not. However, unprocessed iron ore alone had little commercial value, and it was the working of iron and production of tools, weapons and other ironware that made iron economically desirable as a resource. Therefore, peoples with an extensive supply of iron often became renowned and respected as particularly good smiths, smelters and ironworkers.¹⁹⁰

The most famous peoples known for their ironworking around the Mweru-Tanganyika region were the Mambwe, Lungu and Fipa, all of whom had extensive iron deposits in the heartland of their countries.¹⁹¹ Livingstone witnessed the Lungu iron industry as he passed through the area in 1873, mentioned many mines and furnaces and described how the hoes, axes and spears that the Lungu produced were traded south with the Bemba.¹⁹² The Mambwe were also famed as smiths. Their large iron deposits enabled them to become known as some of the premier weapon-makers in the region, be it axes and spears or arrowheads.¹⁹³ They also traded their ironware extensively with passing Arab-Swahili caravans who often stopped among them *en route* to *Kazembe* and *Katanga*.¹⁹⁴ Finally, the Fipa between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Rukwa were renowned for having the strongest iron industry of any people in the region. They had abundant supplies of iron ore and even had access to limestone to remove the impurities in the iron during the smelting process.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 103, Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 43 and Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, pp. 323-324 and p. 342.

¹⁹⁰ Willis, R.G., *East Central Africa Part XV: The Fipa and Related Peoples of South-West Tanzania and North-East Zambia* (International African Institute, London, 1966), pp. 25-26.

¹⁹¹ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 75 and p. 184, Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 297 and Brelsford, W.V., *The Tribes of Northern Rhodesia* (The Government Printer, Lusaka, 1956), p. 72.

¹⁹² St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 203.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁹⁴ Brelsford, *Tribes of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 72.

¹⁹⁵ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 206.

Iron, or rather iron goods, were obviously an essential item for all of the different peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika region. Iron tools and weapons were in great demand and, therefore, traded extensively between groups such as the Mambwe and Lungu and those who needed weapons, such as the Bemba. Also, ironworkers soon transferred their skills across to working on damaged firearms, which led to increased interaction between them and both Arab-Swahili traders and European colonial authorities.¹⁹⁶ In many ways, the skills of ironworking were more of a commercial item than the iron goods themselves.

The final mineral ore to be discussed is copper. St John writes that copper could have been the very first commercially traded item in Mweru-Tanganyika, Katanga and the Luapula River valley. He continues by suggesting that the trade in copper predated the growing demand for ivory and as a commodity it was already heading west to the Lunda paramounts and east to the mercantile peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika before the Arab-Swahili ever penetrated the interior.

Later in the nineteenth century both coastal traders and the Nyamwezi still smelted and brought copper on their trading caravans to trade with *Kazembe*, the Bemba *Chitimukulu* and other regional paramounts.¹⁹⁷ This early importance of copper in the Arab-Swahili trade is confirmed by Said bin Habib, Moore and Joseph Moloney.¹⁹⁸ Said bin Habib, for example, recounted that 'copper is taken for sale all over the country'.¹⁹⁹

Andrew Roberts also points out that during the nineteenth century there were direct caravans from the Swahili coast to Katanga specifically for the acquisition of copper.²⁰⁰ Burton saw the importance of copper for the Arab-Swahili traders when he visited Ujiji in the late 1850s. He specifically mentioned Katangese copper being plentiful at the town's markets and that a trade route for copper existed across Lake Tanganyika, through the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and west into Katanga.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 225

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 217 and p. 223.

¹⁹⁸ Moore, 'Industry and Trade', p. 137, Moloney, *With Stairs to Katanga*, p. 51 and 'Narrative of Said Bin Habeeb, An Arab Inhabitant of Zanzibar', *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, XV (1860), p. 147.

¹⁹⁹ 'Narrative of Said bin Habeeb', p. 146.

²⁰⁰ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 56.

²⁰¹ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, p. 55.

Katanga was renowned for its high quality copper and some of the first Arab-Swahili caravans heading west into the interior had that region as their ultimate target. However, what truly catapulted copper into its position of economic prominence during the nineteenth century was the penetration of the mineral-rich region of Katanga by Msiri and his Nyamwezi followers, the Yeke.²⁰² This represents one of the first examples of traders settling permanently in the interior and taking control of the production of a particular commercial item for their own benefit. Msiri's rule had many negative effects on the region as a whole and it could be argued that he introduced a predatory style of politics whose significance has endured to this day.

Large amounts of Katangese copper were made into jewellery or wire, with the Tabwa, Lungu, Mambwe, Nyiha and Nyakyusa peoples all commonly wearing copper wire by the late 1870s.²⁰³ It was in the latter form that copper became of central importance to trade in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor. Throughout the nineteenth century, copper wire was as much a form of currency for the coastal traders and peoples of the interior as European imports, such as cloth and beads, were. It was an item that could be easily carried by traders, kept its value and remained undamaged and untarnished across long periods of time. For these reasons, it was a perfect medium of exchange in a trade whose greatest challenge was the transportation of goods across vast distances. Copper was in many ways the perfect commercial item and should be recognised for its role as the facilitator of a great deal of other trade in the interior during this period.

Having examined the local natural resources traded in the Mweru-Tanganyika region during the nineteenth century, the two most important trade goods imported by the Arab-Swahili caravans, namely cloth and bead, will be discussed.²⁰⁴

As described above in the analysis of the copper trade, cloth and beads effectively amounted to units of currency for Arab-Swahili traders in the African interior. Andrew Roberts suggests a tentative estimate of four yards of calico being equal to a load of salt, a slave or a piece of ironware during the second half of the nineteenth-

²⁰² Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 145 and Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 207.

²⁰³ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol.1, p. 198 and St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 223.

²⁰⁴ Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 354, Deutsch, 'Slavery and Social Change', p. 79, Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 104, Hore, *Tanganyika*, p. 71 and Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, pp. 323-324.

century.²⁰⁵ However, he also admits that the value of cloth and beads did fluctuate regularly, depending on the current fashions and desires in Central Africa.²⁰⁶

Some cloth was produced by the various African peoples of the interior, and it is probable that this entered the regional trade networks previously discussed. Said bin Habib recounted cloth being made in Katanga with the abundant cotton supply during his visit in the 1840s and Willis writes of how the area between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Rukwa was a well-known centre of weaving, producing good quality cloth that was worn by many in the region.²⁰⁷

Larson is of the opinion that historians have not devoted sufficient attention to the role of cloth in trade throughout Central Africa during this period. He claims that it was a vitally important method of purchase for the Arab-Swahili traders and played a significant role in the appropriation of slaves for the oceanic trades of the Indian and Atlantic oceans. The most important and popular type of imported cloth was the American cotton cloth produced in New England, often referred to as *Merikani* in the Mweru-Tanganyika region and made famous by the Arab-Swahili trader, Juma bin Salim wad Rakad who was famously dubbed Juma Merikani for the vast amounts of this cloth that he traded. It proved to be increasingly popular amongst many African peoples throughout the nineteenth century, reaching its zenith in the second half of the century, which roughly corresponded to the height of the power of the coastal traders in the interior.²⁰⁸

Beads were the lesser partner of the pair of imported goods commonly carried by the Arab-Swahili into the African interior, with cloth generally taking precedence. Obviously, beads had less physical uses than cloth did, but their small size and durability in comparison to great rolls of material meant that generally every trader would take at least a small amount with them on their *safaris* into the interior.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 207 and 'Narrative of Said bin Habeeb', p. 146.

²⁰⁶ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 64.

²⁰⁷ 'Narrative of Said bin Habeeb', p. 147 and Willis, *The Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. 26.

²⁰⁸ Larson, 'African Slave Trades', pp. 11-12.

²⁰⁹ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 64 and pp. 51-52, Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 206, Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, pp. 323-324, St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 214, Deutsch, 'Slavery and Social Change', p. 79, Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 354, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 6 and Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 140.

Beads became a form of currency for many in Mweru-Tanganyika during the nineteenth-century as there was “no coined money”.²¹⁰ The value of beads was based upon the current trends in the region, which led to changing demands for different varieties of beads.²¹¹ *Masaro* pipe-beads, for example, were hugely popular in the area around Ujiji from the 1870s to the 1890s but in other areas beads of “many colours, sizes, and cultural connotations” were desired by the African population.²¹²

Almost every major African people around the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in the nineteenth-century, from the Arab-Swahili traders to the Bemba and Lunda of *Kazembe*, valued beads as a mercantile commodity.²¹³ They were traded for all kinds of other items, be it livestock, tobacco, pack mules or even canoes, as Livingstone did.²¹⁴ The African peoples would then incorporate them into their everyday lives, with some of their stranger uses including being used to make Tabwa hairpieces, memory boards or even as ingredients in magic and sorcery.²¹⁵ Andrew Roberts suggests that, whatever their use in the nineteenth-century, beads became something of a Central African necessity, which only helped increase their attraction as a commodity.²¹⁶

Cloth and beads were merely two of the many different Arab-Swahili imports. However, they were two of the most important, and cloth, in particular, played a pivotal role in the development of the long-distance trade. These trade goods were essential for the Arab-Swahili traders to be able to initiate any form of exchange with the chiefs and paramounts that they found in the interior that possessed stockpiles of the resources for which there was a demand at the coast.

Imported goods also played an important role in the socio-political hierarchies of many of the different peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika region. The exchange of slaves, ivory and other resources of the African interior for imported goods, such as cloth and beads, allowed chiefs and headmen to increase their own power and the

²¹⁰ ‘Narrative of Said bin Habeeb’, p. 147, Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 64, Hore, *Tanganyika*, p. 123 and Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 101.

²¹¹ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 192 and Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 64.

²¹² Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 64 and Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 104.

²¹³ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 113 and 150 and Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 114 and 123.

²¹⁴ Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 58 and St John, ‘Kazembe and the Corridor’, p. 224.

²¹⁵ Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 44, 71, 180, 181, 182, 185 and 186.

²¹⁶ Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 142.

size of their following. This all stems from the established fact that in much of pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa political power had more to do with the control of people than land. With Africa being historically “land-rich” and “people-poor”, political leaders needed people and supporters. By bringing into being networks of loyalties and dependencies, the vertical distribution of imported goods was a key means of achieving this aim. This, in turn, increased the power and wealth of chiefs, as more tributary followers meant that they could obtain more ivory and other exportable commodities. The imported goods that they obtained in exchange for these commodities were then used to continuously attract more people to the chiefs in question, thereby increasing their powerbase even further.

Finally, in any analysis of the long-distance trade in Central Africa, the production and commercial exchange of food must be considered. Whether these foodstuffs were the fish of the lakes and waterways of East-Central Africa, the herds of cattle and goats of the highland plateaus or the huge variety of crops grown in the gardens of the peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika, food represented one of the most important items of production for any group of people in the region. It must be remembered that the commercial, industrialised agricultural techniques of nineteenth-century Europe and America were alien to the peoples of Central Africa and their level of agrarian technology and techniques had more in common with the medieval peasant farmers of Western Europe than the vast mechanised plantations of the USA. The people of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor were subsistence farmers and therefore the production of food was central to their very existence.

Insofar as the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor is concerned, the peoples of the region kept livestock and grew a remarkable variety of crops, including; corn, manioc, sorghum, beans, bananas, cauliflowers, onions, tomatoes, turnips, maize, peas, sweet potatoes, coffee, sugar, sesame, pepper, rice, wheat, yams, cucumbers, mushrooms, artichokes, millet, groundnuts, cassava, chillies, oranges, limes, mangoes, spinach, pumpkins, lemons, apples, dates, pomegranates and cocoa.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Declé, *Savage Africa*, p. 349; Deutsch, ‘Slavery and Social Change’, p. 78; Hore, *Tanganyika*, p. 123 and p. 148; Roberts, ‘Nyamwezi Trade’, p. 57; Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes*, vol. 2, p. 284; Willis, *The Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. 23 and p. 50; Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, pp. 210-211; Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 203; Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 2, p. 49 and p. 340; Cameron, *Across Africa*, pp. 530-534; *Echoes of Service*, no. 297, November 1893, p. 250, no. 316, August 1894, p. 197, no. 364, August 1896, p. 250 and “Johnston to Rosebery”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, pp. 207-228 and p. 256.

However, despite this variety, the quantity of crops produced was insufficient to fully sustain the inhabitants of the region. This forced local groups to rely upon the regional export of other commercial items, such as iron and salt, to fully meet their nutritional requirements.²¹⁸ Easy access to large amounts of fish did help to offset the lack of quality agrarian produce in Mweru-Tanganyika to a certain extent,²¹⁹ but fishing was a mainly seasonal activity and therefore could not be relied upon to feed what was a relatively densely populated area.²²⁰

The keeping of livestock was also by no means a replacement source of food in Mweru-Tanganyika during this period. As Andrew Roberts suggests, the peoples of the region were almost exclusively agriculturalists, reliant upon crops, rather than large herds and flocks.²²¹ However, the Mambwe were the exception to this rule. They were known as superb pastoralists and kept large herds of cattle and flocks of goats, sheep, fowl and pigeons, greatly assisted in this endeavour by the excellent pasture present in the heartland of their country.²²² This proved to be something of a double edged sword, as their animal wealth did not go unnoticed by surrounding peoples who relied upon raiding and looting, as opposed to the more peaceful farming methods of the Corridor peoples. The Ngoni constantly raided the Mambwe heartland from their bases to the north-west of Lake Nyasa, drawn by the large Mambwe herds up until 1870 when the Bemba were able to halt Ngoni incursions into Mweru-Tanganyika.²²³ Far from bringing peace to the region, the Bemba in fact replaced the Ngoni as raiders of the Mambwe herds, eventually leading to the Mambwe paramount entering a tributary relationship with the northernmost Bemba chiefs and headmen.²²⁴

The need to supplement locally-produced foodstuffs drew the peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika into local commercial networks. These, as has already been pointed out, long-predated the arrival of coastal traders. Mweru-Tanganyikans would trade what

²¹⁸ Burton, *Lake Regions*, vol. 1, pp. 60-61 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 364, August 1896, p. 250.

²¹⁹ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 50.

²²⁰ Moore, 'Industry and Trade', p. 147 and p. 153.

²²¹ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 76.

²²² Willis, *The Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. 23, p. 43 and p.51, Brelford, *Tribes of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 71 and St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 206.

²²³ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 206.

²²⁴ Brelford, *Tribes of Northern Rhodesia*, p. 71.

resources they had, be it copper, salt or iron, for crops, fish or livestock with their more food-affluent neighbours, such as the Fipa.

However, this all changed with the arrival of Arab-Swahili caravans of ever increasing size throughout the nineteenth century. Food production developed in the region beyond a pure subsistence level for the very first time, with the passing caravan's demands for the most basic of supplies and provisions stimulating local production, particularly that of food.²²⁵ Caravans needed food for hundreds, if not thousands, of mouths and it all had to be bought *en route* so as not to limit the amount of trade goods that could be carried into the interior by the Arab-Swahili trader's porters.²²⁶ This led to what Andrew Roberts has called an "agricultural revolution" in Mweru-Tanganyika, with food produced specifically for sale to the Arab-Swahili caravans, rather than simply to support the farmer's village and family.²²⁷

This "revolution" certainly had a mixed effect on the region as often occurs when rapid and radical changes befall an age-old socio-economic and political system. The need to improve the production of food to the extent that enough was made for export did encourage the adoption of new, hardier and more productive crops, such as rice, cassava and maize, which in the long run benefited the peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika considerably.

However, the arrival and assimilation of large numbers of Arab-Swahili traders and their slaves into the existing social hierarchy of the region caused many problems. Firstly, neither of these groups produced any food in the region yet both consumed considerable amounts, straining the already overburdened farmers, fishermen and drovers. In addition, the coastal traders repeatedly weakened the productive potential of Mweru-Tanganyika by enslaving and pressganging men to serve as porters who otherwise would have been able to assist in the production of food in the region. This had the unexpected impact of forcing peoples of the interior to rely upon slave importation so as to have enough labour to effectively continue their

²²⁵ Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 142 and Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 52 and 57.

²²⁶ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 52.

²²⁷ Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 142.

agriculture. This reportedly occurred at the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika between the Lungu and the Fipa, who used slaves as agricultural workers.²²⁸

2.3 The Effects of the Arab-Swahili Long-Distance Trade

The final section of this chapter will assess the impact of the coastal traders and the long-distance trade upon the region. Andrew Roberts has suggested that a transformation of older methods of exchange occurred, allowing the development of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade in Central Africa.²²⁹ Therefore, it is important to understand the situation that existed prior to the penetration of coastal trader into the interior.

In *Nachituti's Gift*, Gordon focuses upon the link between society, economy and environment, perfectly encapsulating the interconnectedness of these three aspects of pre-colonial Central African life. The earliest networks of exchange were based almost entirely upon the commercialisation of resources, such as iron and salt, owned by specific peoples rather than existing as "common property".²³⁰ This created a natural supply and demand relationship between those with access to the resources and those without. As Gordon describes "Rights in resources were always a matter of power, exerted and enforced through available cultural, social, political, and economic means" and therefore wealth in pre-colonial Africa was measured through social relationships, rather than by the ownership of property.²³¹

In other words, prior to the penetration of Central Africa by foreign traders, commerce was more a process of social interaction than of economic transaction. A "rich" chief in pre-colonial Africa would control important resources that he would then distribute to his tributary headmen, and in return they would offer him their allegiance. Ergo, that chief would become "wealthy" through the acquisition of increased social control, but that "wealth" was based entirely upon social contexts. A paramount chief was only "rich" as long as he maintained the social networks of distribution of the resources he claimed to "own". Gordon sums up this very idea when he writes,

²²⁸ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 553.

²²⁹ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 52.

²³⁰ Gordon, *Nachituti's Gift*, p. 4.

²³¹ Ibid.

Property is about power; rights in property, whether public or private, have to be enforced, and the agencies of enforcement are always located in social contexts. Individuals who claim ownership of resources cannot act autonomously; their claims rely on social networks that act to support resource rights.²³²

In simplified terms, what the penetration of the Arab-Swahili traders into the African interior truly did was to drive a wedge into the carefully balanced socio-economic networks of exchange and distribution that defined pre-colonial African “commerce”. For the first time, wealth became measurable in physical terms through the amount of property owned, and what the coastal traders had achieved was to introduce a way for chiefs to ignore the social obligations of the traditional networks of exchange and strike out alone by exploiting the resources that were previously protected by the social networks of redistribution.²³³ For example, why would a chief ignore salt deposits near his village that supposedly belonged to his overlord, when by exploiting them himself he could gain wealth and power through interaction and trade with the Arab-Swahili penetrating the interior of the continent?

This also led to the beginning of the overexploitation of the natural resources of the region. As Thomson highlighted, the African continent was barely worked, aside from the coasts and the hunting of elephants for ivory, and this, combined with the new ideas regarding wealth acquisition introduced through East-Central Africa’s contact with the global economy, gave many chiefs the idea to begin exploiting the natural resources they found around them.²³⁴ Prior to the contact with the coastal traders there would have been values and regulatory apparatus in place to stop the overexploitation of these natural resources, but in the name of the maximisation of profit and production these were quickly eroded.²³⁵

It might be expected that this move away from traditional social hierarchies and power structures would have benefited the chiefs at the lower levels of society, with their traditional overlords now removed and a degree of economic independence established. However, the Arab-Swahili traders, whilst appearing initially beneficial,

²³² Gordon, *Nachituti’s Gift*, pp. 6-7.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4 and pp. 6-7.

²³⁴ Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes*, vol. 2, p. 279.

²³⁵ Gordon, *Nachituti’s Gift*, pp. 6-7.

were actually able to stimulate resource production by the peoples of the interior and then monopolise the essential position of entrepreneur in the network. The indigenous locals of Mweru-Tanganyika were denied the chance to professionalise from their subsistence level of commerce and never developed into the middlemen in the trade, a position that would have seen them reap the benefits of the exploitation of their natural resources that they deserved.²³⁶

The advent of European colonialism sealed the door upon any potential for indigenous Africans to take up the middleman role they longed for. They had seen a potential opening with the removal of Arab-Swahili power from the African interior by the European powers, only for the great commercial corporations of Europe to sweep in and continue from where the coastal traders had left off before their demise.²³⁷ All that was left for the Africans was the adaptation of old trade skills to the newly introduced industries of the modern world. Blacksmiths became gunsmiths and tinkers, and wage economies replaced the subsistence agriculture of old.²³⁸ However, in the long run, this economic specialisation did little to develop the internal economy of the African continent. Local economic pressures remained more important than the affairs of the global economy and Central African people's only contact with the wider commercial sphere was as primary producers of the goods that the Europeans then exported to the markets of the world.²³⁹

To conclude, the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade acted as a "glass ceiling" to the peoples of East-Central Africa. For the first time they were able to see a commercial world beyond the confines of their pre-colonial socio-economic networks of exchange and distribution, and were made to believe that through their interaction with the Arab-Swahili traders in the African interior they could achieve economic independence from their traditional overlords. However, when they entered the sphere of the long-distance trade they found that the lucrative entrepreneurial middlemen positions had been monopolised firstly by the coastal traders and then by the European corporations, and all that was left for them was the hauntingly familiar role of primary producer to a higher controlling power. Arab-Swahili traders successfully introduced the world economy to East-Central Africa and the people

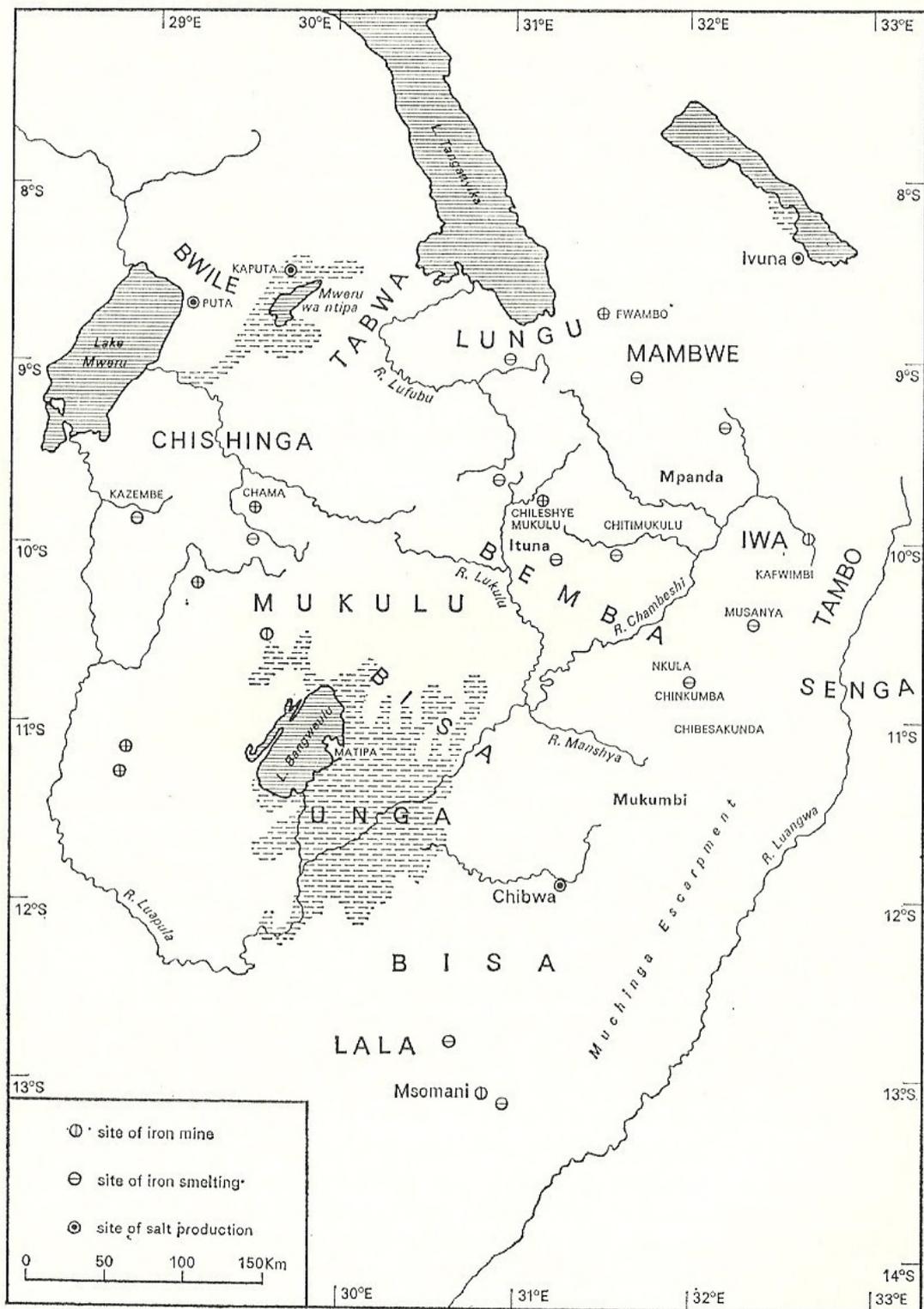
²³⁶ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 225.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

²³⁹ Roberts, 'Nyamwezi Trade', p. 65.

who lived there. However, in so doing, they had in fact signed the death warrant for the traditional networks of exchange that had existed in the interior prior to their arrival. They left the African people stuck, unable to return to the deceased socio-economic interactions of old, yet not allowed to properly benefit from the new commercial world they had had little choice but to enter.



Map 2 - Map of natural resources in Mweru-Tanganyika. [Roberts, A.D., *A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and change in the north-eastern Zambia before 1900* (Longman, London, 1973), p. 185]

3. “The Last Argument of Kings”²⁴⁰ – Violence in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in the Nineteenth Century

Violence was a part of daily life for many of the peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor during the nineteenth-century. Warfare and conflict defined much of the region’s history, whether it was internecine cross-border wars between rival villages, chiefs and clans, or the more organised, professional raiding and hunting of the Arab-Swahili traders and their *ruga-ruga*. St John goes so far as to suggest that by the second half of the nineteenth-century, the true rulers of the Corridor were raiders, not traders.²⁴¹ This chapter is devoted to exploring this violence and how the arrival of coastal traders in Mweru-Tanganyika affected its character.

Firstly, the new military methods and tactics imported into the region by the Arab-Swahili will be examined, including the employment of *ruga-ruga* slave-mercenary soldiers. African responses to their arrival will also be addressed. The importance of firearms will then be explored, as well as the trade in powder and guns and the impact these modern weapons had upon the levels of violence in the region. Were guns the key to the success of the coastal traders in the African interior or has their role been overemphasised by historians, and other equally important factors, such as internal African disunity, been marginalised as a result?

Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the ideas put forward by Reid, who has recently suggested that a “military revolution” occurred in Central Africa during the nineteenth-century.²⁴² Much of Reid’s model focusses upon external groups, such as the Arab-Swahili, and their role as agents of this “military revolution”. Consequently, Mweru-Tanganyika, a region defined by Arab-Swahili violence during

²⁴⁰ *Echoes of Service: A Record of Labour for the Lord in Many Lands*, no. 273, November 1892, p. 258.

²⁴¹ St John, C., ‘Kazembe and the Tanganyika-Nyasa Corridor, 1880-1890’, in Birmingham, D. and Gray, R. (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 227.

²⁴² Reid, R.J., *Warfare in African History* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 107.

this period, is the perfect backdrop to determine the accuracy of his ideas. Was there in fact a “military revolution” with entirely new motivations driving forward the violence in the region? Or did the “intrusive” groups of coastal traders simply insinuate themselves into societies already fraught with warfare and conflict, turning pre-existing tensions to their own advantage?

3.1 *Ruga-ruga* and the African Response to Nineteenth-Century Violence

One of the most striking features of the coastal trader’s modus operandi, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth-century, was their willingness to resort to extreme levels of violence in order to achieve their exploitative aims. Whilst the coastal traders themselves must bear responsibility as the instigators of much of the conflict that engulfed the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor during this period, the true perpetrators of the day-to-day violence were their heavily-armed followers – commonly referred to as *ruga-ruga*.

In the simplest terms, the *ruga-ruga* were young, professional, slave-mercenaries, used by the Arab-Swahili traders as a standing military force and paid in ivory, slaves and other war booty.²⁴³ They were the mailed fist of the coastal traders and the spearhead of their penetration into the African interior.²⁴⁴ Reid describes the *ruga-ruga* thus:

(The Arab-Swahili) programmes were carried out by slaves armed with firearms and a new generation of aggressive and displaced youth, likewise equipped with muskets and increasingly adept at their use. These were the professional soldiers known as the *ruga-ruga* ... To some the *ruga-ruga* were mere thugs and criminals; it is clear enough, however, that they were part of a self-perpetuating cycle of socio-political reformation, for military states both created the upheaval and displacement which made young manpower available, and then fed off that manpower in pursuit of expanded political

²⁴³ Hore, E.C., *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa (2nd Ed.)* (Edward Stanford, London, 1892), p. 95 and Deutsch, J., ‘Notes on the Rise of Slavery and Social Change in Unyamwezi’, in Doyle, S. and Médard, H. (eds.), *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 2007), p. 86.

²⁴⁴ Gamwell, H and M., ‘A History of Abercorn’, *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, vol. 4, no. 6 (Lusaka, 1961), p. 515 and Lary, P. and Wright, M., ‘Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi’, *African Historical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1971), p. 573.

visions and commercial profit. *Ruga-ruga* either operated in small, opportunistic bands, raiding the busy commercial highways, or served as rootless mercenaries, or committed themselves to the larger state-building projects proceeding across the region.²⁴⁵

In other words, the *ruga-ruga* were a product of the violent conditions ushered in by the Arab-Swahili traders. At the same time, by perpetuating the conflict and warfare that was endemic in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor they were in fact prolonging their own existence and encouraging their own use. The more successful their violent operations, the more ivory and slaves their Arab-Swahili employers would obtain. The more ivory and slaves they obtained, the more firearms they could buy with which to arm more *ruga-ruga*.²⁴⁶ Often, the groups of *ruga-ruga* numbered in the thousands and were effectively unstoppable by most of the chiefs in the region, except the most powerful paramounts and warlords.²⁴⁷

As Reid aptly puts it, the use of professional soldiers by the Arab-Swahili represented the “privatisation of violence” in Central Africa.²⁴⁸ By which he infers that that the Arab-Swahili’s use of *ruga-ruga* represented a distinctive shift away from the traditional military organisation of the various polities of the Mweru-Tanganyika region. Prior to the penetration of coastal traders, the ability to raise large, well-equipped “armies” was the domain of paramount chiefs and their strongest vassals, for example the paramount of the Lunda Empire, the *Mwata Yamvo*, and his governor of the eastern marches of the empire, the *Mwata Kazembe*.

These political elites were at the tip of a feudal pyramid of vassals and dependents, all linked together by networks of distribution and tribute. Paramount chiefs attracted more people to their polities with the assurance of the protection and organisation provided by a centralised state and promises of the distribution of imported trade goods, such as cloth. In exchange, the paramount’s dependents would pay him tribute, either in goods or services. Goods would include items such as ivory and salt gathered locally by village communities, whereas services ranged from labour on

²⁴⁵ Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 119.

²⁴⁶ Roberts, A.F., *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013), p. 21.

²⁴⁷ Sheriff, A., *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (James Currey, Oxford, 1987), p. 194.

²⁴⁸ Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 117.

public infrastructure works or the gardens and farms of the paramount, to service in the polity's military if required. Therefore, only the most powerful chiefs could gather significant forces from amongst those obligated to fight for them.

The arrival of the Arab-Swahili and the *ruga-ruga* changed this. The *ruga-ruga* fought for payment and profit rather than out of social obligation and it was possible for even the lowliest coastal trader to employ a large armed following based upon the promise of plunder and booty from raids. In addition, the *ruga-ruga* had no allegiance to any employer or chief, beyond the one currently paying them, and therefore lesser headmen and village chiefs were able to organise military forces as never before. The "privatisation of violence" saw military strength based upon economic wealth rather than the control of people and networks of distribution and control, and meant that even low-level African political elites could expand their own power if they could afford to pay the *ruga-ruga* needed to realise their ambitions.

This process was not limited to vassal chiefs and came to influence the military organisation of many of the region's largest and most powerful polities. Paramount chiefs began to employ Arab-Swahili traders and their *ruga-ruga* warriors to gain a military advantage over their neighbours and rivals, promising them their pick of the spoils or favourable trading terms. This, combined with the growth in the strength of vassal-chiefs, saw political violence, at even the highest levels, reliant upon external allied and mercenary forces rather than the traditional feudalistic system of military service by sub-chiefs and their men who were required to fight for their paramount chief.

As with their Arab-Swahili employers, the *ruga-ruga* were a very heterogeneous group. They belonged to many of the peoples of the Central African interior. Many of them were individuals who had entered the Arab-Swahili world as slaves and porters. While some *ruga-ruga* hailed from the Swahili coast itself, others as Moloney reported, did not even speak Swahili.²⁴⁹ The Nyamwezi were particularly prominent within the *ruga-ruga* ranks.²⁵⁰ They operated in such numbers and with such strength that some of them were even able to set up their own independent polities –

²⁴⁹ Moloney, J.A., *With Captain Stairs to Katanga: Slavery and subjugation in the Congo 1891-92* (Sampson Low, Manston & Co. Ltd, London, 1893), p. 77.

²⁵⁰ Deutsch, 'Slavery and Social Change', p. 85, Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 559 and Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 117.

Garenganze, the conquest state of Msiri's Yeke in southern Katanga, being a notable example. A handful of professional soldiers in the employment of the Arab-Swahili were not even Africans. Burton mentioned hiring eight *ex-ruga-ruga* "Baloch" mercenaries for his journey across Africa when he arrived at Zanzibar in 1856.²⁵¹

Baluchis originated from the coastal regions of modern-day Iran and Pakistan, and found their way into East-Central Africa by way of the Omani Sultanate and Zanzibar. Unlike many of the Arab-Swahili, the Baluchi were known for their discipline, professionalism and lack of attachment to the Swahili coast, which made them perfect for military use in the interior.²⁵²

The *ruga-ruga*'s ethnic heterogeneity was but one facet of their complex history. Although ostensibly trained as "soldiers", the *ruga-ruga* were employed in a variety of roles by their Arab-Swahili paymasters.²⁵³ Besides taking part in direct military operations and slave raids, they also guarded caravans, hunted for food and ivory, collected tribute from their master's vassals, and patrolled the borders of Arab-Swahili-controlled lands in the interior, sometimes acting as a form of military police and even as symbolic deterrents for any opposition to coastal dominance in the Mweru-Tanganyika region.²⁵⁴ Writing from just north-west of Lake Mweru in January 1887, Hermann von Wissmann was particularly contemptuous about their role in the collecting of tribute on behalf of their coastal trader employers. The German explorer called it "an arbitrary system of pillaging" and "a reckless system of extortion".²⁵⁵

An important task sometimes assigned to prominent and loyal *ruga-ruga* was to lead caravans into the African interior in the absence of their Arab-Swahili employers.²⁵⁶ These exceptionally well-trusted individuals were the most loyal and capable of the

²⁵¹ Burton, R.F. [with Beadle, B.A. and Beke C.T. (trans. and eds.)], *The Lands of Cazembe: Lacerda's Journey to Cazembe in 1798 (Also Journey of the Pombeiros: P.J. Baptista and Amaro José, Across Africa from Angola to Tette on the Zambeze and A Résumé of the Journey of MM. Monteiro and Gamitto* (Royal Geographical Society, London, 1873), vol. 1, p. 14.

²⁵² Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 549.

²⁵³ Von Wissmann, H. (Bergmann, M.J.A. trans.), *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa from the Congo to the Zambesi in the Years 1886 and 1887* (trans. Bergmann M.J.A.) (Chatto and Windus, London, 1891), p. 187.

²⁵⁴ Musambachime, M.C., *A Reconstructed Biography of an East African Trader: Nshimba of Kilwa Island in the South-West Corner of Lake Mweru, Zambia* (Unpublished Work, University of Zambia), p. 6 and 16.

²⁵⁵ Von Wissmann, *My Second Journey*, pp. 209-210.

²⁵⁶ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 11, Deutsch, 'Slavery and Social Change', p. 87, Burton, *The Lands of Cazembe*, vol. 2, p. 311 and Page, M.E., 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense" of the East African Slave Trade', *Etudes d'Histoire Africaine*, VI (U.N.A.Z.A., Kinshasa, 1974), p. 112.

Arab-Swahili's armed followers, and therefore entrusted with the success of entire caravans. Many of the most famous traders in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor during the second half of the nineteenth-century started their careers as *ruga-ruga* mercenaries. Abdullah ibn Suliman and his lieutenant, Nsemiwe, were both prime examples of this trend, becoming two of the most feared traders in Mweru-Tanganyika by the time of the establishment of British colonial rule in Central Africa.

Abdullah ibn Suliman was an Arab-Swahili from the island of Pemba who first arrived in Mweru-Tanganyika in 1867 with Tippu Tip's second expedition into the African interior as one of thirty young men who formed the core of the caravan.²⁵⁷ After Tippu Tip moved on into the Congo, Abdullah stayed in Itabwa in support of Kumba Kumba, until the latter's eventual exit from the region in 1876.²⁵⁸ This effectively left Abdullah as Tippu Tip's representative in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor for the rest of the nineteenth-century, although he acted largely independently of the trader. Andrew Roberts describes a situation of developing dominance by Abdullah, reducing local African chiefs, such as Nsama of the Tabwa, to positions of "virtual clientage" throughout the period.²⁵⁹

Nsemiwe Kalangula was Abdullah's second-in-command and was a Nyamwezi chief from Unyanyembe who led some 700 Nyamwezi in the service of the Arab-Swahili.²⁶⁰ He was well-known for his independence and opposition to any outside influence on the region under Arab-Swahili control in Mweru Tanganyika and even took over Abdullah's village upon the Arab-Swahili's death in 1916.²⁶¹ He famously destroyed the British flag given to the Tabwa Chief, Mukula, by Alfred Sharpe and was then besieged by C.F.S. forces along with his trading partner, Masala, in August 1894, an action that led to Masala's death.²⁶²

These two figures will be discussed further in Chapter 4, but from these brief biographies it is clear to see the career paths taken by many prominent traders in the later decades of the nineteenth-century in Mweru-Tanganyika. They emerged from

²⁵⁷ Roberts, A.D., 'The History of Abdullah ibn Suliman', *African Social Research*, 4 (December 1967), p. 241 and 243.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242 and 245.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 246.

relative obscurity amongst the ranks of the *ruga-ruga* and other military followers of leading traders, such as Tippu Tip and Kumba Kumba, to become merchants in their own right and dominate regions of the African interior and the peoples who lived therein.

The effects of the *ruga-ruga*'s actions were generally pernicious for African societies in the Mweru-Tanganyika region during this period.²⁶³ Whilst they operated in a very similar way to the Arab-Swahili themselves, the *ruga-ruga* were seen to be more brutal in their methods and they often exceeded the levels of violence usually employed by the coastal traders.²⁶⁴ For example, to the north of Lake Mweru, unrestrained *ruga-ruga* deployed as sharpshooters in the long grass, fired at local peoples at will, purposefully stopping the free movement of people so they could continue their violent depopulation and exploitation of the region.²⁶⁵

Even von Wissmann, renowned as he was in Central Africa for his confrontational nature and often violent exchanges with the Bemba and Arab-Swahili traders and their *ruga-ruga*, commented upon the ferocity of the *ruga-ruga*, describing them as far more vicious and merciless than the Arab-Swahili traders they served. He wrote:

he (the Arab-Swahili trader) is not capable of such designing wickedness as those slaves of his, the half-blood brutes from the coast, who, besides the tribute which they have to pay to their master, provide for themselves by stealing slave wherever they can ... (the Arab-Swahili) little cares how his people look after themselves.²⁶⁶

Von Wissmann continued by suggesting that only the direct presence of senior coastal traders, such as Tippu Tip or Rimaliza, curtailed the violent excesses often wrought by the *ruga-ruga* on the peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor.²⁶⁷

Crawford was equally scathing of *ruga-ruga* activities in the region. He met a group of them led by Senami, a Nyamwezi lieutenant of the coastal trader Nshimba, to the west of Lake Mweru in December 1895. He wrote that 'their (the *ruga-ruga*) name became ultimately the verb to "murder and loot"' and was disgusted by the necklaces

²⁶³ Burton, *The Lands of Cazembe*, vol. 2, p. 323.

²⁶⁴ Page, 'Tippu Tip and the Arab "Defense"', p. 109.

²⁶⁵ *Echoes of Service*, no. 328, February 1895, pp. 50-51.

²⁶⁶ Von Wissmann, *My Second Journey*, p. 183.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

of human teeth that they wore and how they had “little ear for the gospel”.²⁶⁸ However, he does continue by saying that they listened to his preaching and responded positively, promising to reform their murderous ways. It is debateable whether this was a true conversion of Senami and his *ruga-ruga* to Christian ideals or whether the Nyamwezi leader was simply shrewd enough to see the direction in which the wind was blowing, with the C.F.S. swiftly encroaching upon Lake Mweru’s western shore, and hoped that favourable relations with the missionary would help him in the long run.²⁶⁹

In addition, some of these *ruga-ruga* caravan leaders split off from their employers and set themselves up as traders in their own right. These unaffiliated mercenaries-turned-traders often came into conflict with the larger Arab-Swahili trading alliances, such as Tippu Tip’s el-Murjebi clique. On occasion, war even broke out between the different coastal interests. For example, Sharpe noted that Kabunda, the Baluchi trader at the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika, had consistently bad relations with Tippu Tip’s el-Murjebi traders as he was not from the Swahili coast as they were. Also, by the time of Sharpe’s visit to Kabunda, the Baluchi was elderly and reliant upon good relations with and support from the British for his continued rule in the area.²⁷⁰ Therefore, it was a considerable risk for a coastal trader to entrust his caravan to a slave-mercenary henchman without his personal oversight.

Despite their extreme actions against the peoples of the region and potential for betraying their employers, what the *ruga-ruga* offered to the Arab-Swahili traders was the ability to gather large numbers of heavily-armed soldiers at short notice to carry out any tasks that were required of them.²⁷¹ They gave the coastal traders an effective method of fluid and flexible control over the peoples and resources of the Mweru-Tanganyika region.²⁷²

In response to the use of the *ruga-ruga* and violent marauding tactics by the Arab-Swahili, the various inhabitants of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor throughout the nineteenth-century developed their own counter-measures. The most important and

²⁶⁸ *Echoes of Service*, no. 363, August 1896, p. 231.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 231-232.

²⁷⁰ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 6 and 16 and “Sharpe to Johnston”, 17th December 1892, National Archives of the United Kingdom Kew, FO2/54, p. 31.

²⁷¹ Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 21.

²⁷² Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 17.

widely reported of these was the investment of time and energy in fortifying villages, camps and stations by their residents. Fortifications were developed by everyone, from local African peoples to European administrators and missionaries, and even by the Arab-Swahili traders themselves.²⁷³ The concentration of previously scattered peoples and the defensive fortification of settlements for the first time during the early nineteenth-century was the way in which peoples such as the Nyamwezi and Eastern Lunda of *Kazembe* reacted to the increasing violence in East-Central Africa.²⁷⁴

In addition, there was an obvious shift in military tactics in the region during the nineteenth-century, with a move away from the sustained assaults and frontal charges of old, to more measured, less intensive warfare, such as sieges. For example, Alfred Sharpe reported that the Bemba and Arab-Swahili laid siege to the capital of Nsama VI Chimutwe in 1891 for over 3 months before finally defeating the Tabwa paramount.²⁷⁵

One of the most prominent examples of a siege on a fortified settlement in Mweru-Tanganyika during the nineteenth-century involved a contemporary European observer. The aforementioned German explorer, von Wissmann was never one to avoid conflict, and throughout the 1890s his often over-zealous opposition to the slaving of the Arab-Swahili and raiding activities of the region's more militaristic peoples had the British commissioner, Johnston, frustrated to say the least. To the British it seemed that Von Wissmann was intent on fighting every group of slavers or raiders he came across, despite being within the British sphere and engaging peoples often considered peaceable by the British administration.²⁷⁶

In 1893, the correspondences of the officials of the B.C.A.P. contained many accounts of von Wissmann's engagements with the Bemba.²⁷⁷ The German was reported to have been both besieged and besieger in a short period during early

²⁷³ "Marshall to Johnston", 7th May 1894, FO2/68, p. 153.

²⁷⁴ Cunnison, I.G., 'Kazembe and the Arabs to 1870', in Brown, R. and Stokes, E. (eds.), *The Zambesian Past: Studies in Central African History* (Manchester University Press, 1966), p. 227 and Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 4.

²⁷⁵ Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 4 and Roberts, A.D., *A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and change in the north-eastern Zambia before 1900* (Longman, London, 1973), p. 205 "Sharpe to Johnston", 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 22.

²⁷⁶ "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 31st August 1893, FO2/54, p. 387.

²⁷⁷ "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 31st August 1893, FO2/54, p. 387-388 and 391 and "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 14th September 1893, FO2/55, pp. 40-41.

July, firstly being besieged by a Bemba raiding party some 5000 strong in the village of the Lungu chief, Nondo/Nando, not far from Fife station. When the Europeans refused to leave the village to its fate at the hands of the Bemba and negotiations broke down, the German forces opened fire on the besieging Bemba with grenades, rifles, cannon-fire and a Maxim machine gun leaving many Bemba dead and swiftly ending the siege.²⁷⁸

Shortly afterwards, von Wissmann found himself on the other side of the stockade after he was fired upon by Meso and his men, dependents of Abdullah ibn Suliman. The Europeans once again prevailed, breaching the stockade and sacking Meso's fortified village.²⁷⁹ The events of July 1893 in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor encapsulate the shift away from the traditional fluid, marauding military tactics of Central Africa and the widespread adoption of measured siege engagements and larger pitched battles by all the various groups in the region. The driving factor behind this change was the developing idea of fortification of villages and settlements.

The African peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor fortified extensively in the face of raids from the Bemba and Arab-Swahili trader's *ruga-ruga*. Historically, the people who dwelled near the shores of Lake Mweru and Tanganyika had open settlements, whereas those who lived in the highland plateaus had already begun to stockade their villages against Bemba raids.²⁸⁰ Willis, Sharpe, E.J. Glave, Andrew Roberts and the missionaries of the Plymouth Brethren all wrote about the development of defensive fortifications by the African peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor.

Willis reported that the Mambwe and Lungu surrounded their villages with stockades and ditches to combat Bemba raids in the mid-1880s.²⁸¹ These "fortress-villages" had walls, gates and even arrow slits and escape routes built in.²⁸² According to Sharpe, these methods were being copied by Chief Mukula of the Tabwa near

²⁷⁸ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, pp. 234-235 and "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 14th September 1893, FO2/55, p. 36 and "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 31st October 1893, FO2/55, pp. 324-326.

²⁷⁹ "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 25th September 1893, FO2/55, p. 59 and 63 and "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 31st October 1893, FO2/55, pp. 324-326.

²⁸⁰ St John, 'Kazembe and the Corridor', p. 226.

²⁸¹ Willis, R.G., *East Central Africa Part XV: The Fipa and Related Peoples of South-West Tanzania and North-East Zambia* (International African Institute, London, 1966), p. xii and xiv.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Sumbu, to deter *ruga-ruga* raids, at the time of his visit in the early 1890s. He wrote that Mukula's village was "a large one ... surrounded by a double mud wall, loopholed for muskets, and a deep ditch".²⁸³ This trend amongst the Tabwa was also confirmed by the American journalist Glave near to the British Kalungwishi station in August 1894. He wrote that the Tabwa of the Corridor were building "substantial villages" to deter the *ruga-ruga* of Abdullah ibn Suliman.²⁸⁴ The missionaries of the Plymouth Brethren also witnessed the fortification of villages across the region against *ruga-ruga* raids and the building of stockades in Katanga to combat Yeke incursions.²⁸⁵

Europeans also recognised the value of fortifying their stations and posts in Mweru-Tanganyika during this era, and used the tactic extensively to protect their interests. The L.M.S. notably fortified and militarised their stations near Lake Tanganyika to deter Bemba and Arab-Swahili raids in the late 1880s,²⁸⁶ and the British colonial administration turned their stations at Abercorn and Fife into what effectively amounted to fortresses.²⁸⁷ Fife was reportedly "impregnable" to all the peoples of the region, both African and Arab-Swahili.²⁸⁸

European rule did have the effect of stabilising the region to a certain extent, and many of the local African peoples saw the removal of Arab-Swahili traders from the region as a chance to start refocussing their efforts away from the defence and fortification of their settlements.²⁸⁹ Willis wrote of the break-up of many of the larger fortified villages in Mweru-Tanganyika and claimed that by the twentieth-century villages of over 100 people were rare, with even the biggest settlements barely reaching 200 residents.²⁹⁰

²⁸³ Sharpe, A., 'A Journey to Garenganze', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, vol. 14, no. 1 (January 1892), p. 37.

²⁸⁴ Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 254 and Glave, E.J., 'Glave in the Heart of Africa: Peace and War between Lakes Bangweolo and Tanganyika (From the Journals of the Late E.J. Glave)', *The Century Magazine* (New York, August/September 1894), p. 927.

²⁸⁵ *Echoes of Service*, no. 198, June 1888, p. 186, no. 285, May 1893, p. 107 and no. 304, February 1894, p. 50.

²⁸⁶ Morrow, S.F., "... to build the City of God in their midst": *Motives and Methods of the London Missionary Society in Northern Rhodesia, 1887-1941* (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, Brighton, 1985), p. 14.

²⁸⁷ "Sharpe to Johnston", 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 17 and "Johnston to Lord Rosebery, Report on the First Three Years of the Existence of the British Central African Protectorate", 31st March 1894 (no. 31), FO2/66, p. 243.

²⁸⁸ "Sharpe to Johnston", 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 15.

²⁸⁹ *Echoes of Service*, no. 285, May 1893, p. 105.

²⁹⁰ Willis, *Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. 47.

The Arab-Swahili were also not blind to the advantages of fortifications in this era and built stockades in most of their camps and villages.²⁹¹ Andrew Roberts describes how both Tippu Tip and Abdullah built sturdy, well-sited and fortified villages as bases during their time spent in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor.²⁹²

Aside from fortification, many of the peoples directly affected by the violence in the region during the nineteenth-century took the simple evasive step of relocating to safer areas, either protected by more powerful leaders or just away from the immediate conflict. For example, Reid mentions many Nyamwezi abandoning conflict areas in their homeland, rather than stay to fight the intruders or fortify their settlements.²⁹³ In addition, the *Echoes of Service* repeatedly mentions the resettlement of displaced African peoples around the Plymouth Brethren missionaries at their stations across the region. Crawford was particularly well known for gathering refugees of the violence in Mweru-Tanganyika, to the extent that he became known by the honorific epithet *Konga Bantu* or “Gatherer of People” by the 1890s.²⁹⁴

Many refugees gathered around the European stations in the region to benefit from the security they provided against the Arab-Swahili and militaristic African peoples bent upon raiding their homelands. This can be seen in the report by Glave, mentioned above, of Tabwa people resettling close to the British administration’s station on the Kalungwishi River. The relocation of local peoples to areas around European settlements, during this period, was an alternative strategy employed by the Africans in reaction to the arrival of the Arab-Swahili and the violence they brought with them. This interaction between the newly-arrived European colonialists, the local peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and the Arab-Swahili traders will be covered in greater depth in Chapter 4.

3.2 Firearms in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor

Firearms played a pivotal role in the Arab-Swahili penetration of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor. Not only were the coastal traders and their dependents

²⁹¹ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 273.

²⁹² Roberts, ‘History of Abdullah’, pp. 244-245.

²⁹³ Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 4.

²⁹⁴ *Echoes of Service*, no. 330, March 1895, p. 79.

equipped with guns, but they also traded them to many of the peoples of the African interior, making them an important medium of exchange in the region. Reid claims that over the course of the nineteenth-century, some 16 million firearms entered the African continent as a whole. No doubt these were of variable quality and impact, but some at least were used effectively.²⁹⁵ According to Low Monteith Fotheringham, the A.L.C. agent at the northern end of Lake Malawi in September 1893, Central Africa was at the time “flooded” with Arab-Swahili-imported guns and powder.²⁹⁶

This section of the chapter will explore both the role of firearms in the violence across Mweru-Tanganyika during this period and also the geographical spread of firearms from the coastal traders to the local peoples. It will then conclude with an assessment of the importance of guns in the Arab-Swahili domination of the region.

Unsurprisingly, guns were central to Mweru-Tanganyikan violence. Almost all of the coastal traders and their *ruga-ruga* cohorts were armed in some way and a great many with firearms. Swann described this amongst Tippu Tip’s forces when he wrote that “thousands of men and guns were at that moment at his command”.²⁹⁷ The penetration of coastal traders into Mweru-Tanganyika also brought guns to the region in large numbers and they swiftly began to make their presence felt. Guns were vital to Arab-Swahili activities, whether it was the carrying out of military operations against peoples of the Corridor or simply the hunting of animals in the region.²⁹⁸ The power of guns in war is well known to people of the twenty-first century, but to the nineteenth century inhabitants of Central Africa they represented a massive departure from their traditional armament of spears, swords and bows and arrows. With guns, a simple squeeze of the trigger could end the reign of a fearsome African warlord or bring down a towering bull elephant and this potential for murder was certainly exploited to its maximum extent. Guns, in this sense, were something of leveller in Central African society and undoubtedly provided the Arab-Swahili with an advantage over their opponents.

²⁹⁵ *Echoes of Service*, no. 330, March 1895, p. 108.

²⁹⁶ “Johnston to the Foreign Office”, 14th September 1893, FO2/55, p. 37.

²⁹⁷ Swann, A.J. (with Johnston H.H.), *Fighting the Slave-Hunters in Central Africa: A Record of Twenty-Six Years of Travel and Adventure Round the Great Lakes and of the Overthrow of Tip-Pu-Tib, Rimaliza and Other Great Slave Traders* (J.B. Lippincott Co./Seeley and Co. Ltd., Philadelphia/London, 1910), p. 177.

²⁹⁸ Alpers, E.A., *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Pattern of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), p. 12.

For the peoples living in Katanga, the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and the Luapula Valley, guns were a symbol as much as they were a weapon. For the Tabwa people, guns represented the momentous changes that occurred in their society during this era, something perfectly exemplified in the development of their language. The word for “pistol” in KiTabwa was the same as the word for “comet”, both of which were seen as symbols preceding times of great upheaval and change. Livingstone reported that Nsama III Chipili Chipioka was openly scared of firearms when the explorer visited him, having only recently been forced out of his own capital by Tippu Tip’s gun-armed men.²⁹⁹ Therefore, guns, and the idea of their power, had a major effect upon the psyche of the African peoples of the region.

Some of the first non-Arab-Swahili to obtain firearms were the African peoples who operated as commercial intermediaries between the traders and peoples of the interior, for example the Nyamwezi and the Sumbwa/Yeke. These African intermediaries were given guns by the Arab-Swahili if they served in their trading caravans, or would independently trade commodities with the coastal merchants in exchange for guns and powder.³⁰⁰ The Yeke of Katanga relied particularly upon their firearms to establish and maintain their dominance, importing vast amounts of powder into the region. Shortages of powder were all that seemed to hold back Msiri’s ambitions during the middle decades of the nineteenth-century.³⁰¹

However, the main Arab-Swahili trade in firearms and powder was to the chiefs and peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika themselves.³⁰² They traded the firearms they brought from the coast for the slaves gathered in raids by the various peoples of the interior. This in many ways perpetuated the trade by providing the means by which the

²⁹⁹ Roberts, A.F., “‘Comets Importing Change of Times and States’”: Ephemerae and Process among the Tabwa of Zaire’, *American Ethnologist*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1982), p. 724 and Livingstone, D. [Waller, H. (ed.)], *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa. From Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-Five to his Death, Continued by a Narrative of his Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from his Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1875), vol.1, p. 230.

³⁰⁰ Moloney, *With Stairs to Katanga*, pp. 49-50, Deutsch, ‘Slavery and Social Change’, p. 85

³⁰¹ *Echoes of Service*, no. 265, July 1892, p. 161, no. 273, November 1892, p. 257 and Macola, G., ‘The Warlord’s Guns: Firearms in the Political Economy of Msiri’s Conquest State’ (Unpublished Chapter, 2014), p. 2.

³⁰² Baxter, T.W., ‘Slave-Raiders in North-Eastern Rhodesia’, *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Lusaka, 1950), p. 9, Bontinck, F. (trans.), *L’autobiographie de Hamed ben Mohammed el-Murjebi Tippu Tip (ca. 1840-1905)* (Académie royale des Sciences d’Outre-Mer, Brussels, 1974), pp. 60-61, Brelsford, W.V., *The Tribes of Northern Rhodesia* (The Government Printer, Lusaka, 1956), p. 75 and von Wissmann, *My Second Journey*, p. 190.

slavers carried out their harrowing trade.³⁰³ Moloney, of Captain William Stairs' C.F.S. expedition, had the following to say about the sale of firearms in the region in 1890: "the Arabs rule the roost, and smuggle guns and ammunition galore, without any interference". He also reported that "this class of merchandise (guns and powder) commands a ready market".³⁰⁴ Clearly, the Arab-Swahili trade in arms was extensive throughout this region of Central Africa and chiefs and paramounts who ruled there presented a ready market with plenty of commodities to exchange with the coastal merchants.

Large African polities, such as the Eastern Lunda of *Kazembe* and Bemba, were some of the most enthusiastic participants in the trade in firearms. For example, the Lunda of *Kazembe* possessed firearms as early as the first half of the nineteenth-century, according to Said bin Habib, and Macola suggests that by 1890 they had a vast arsenal of guns in their possession.³⁰⁵

The Bemba present a more interesting case of an African people's relationship with Arab-Swahili imported firearms. The Bemba were known as one of the most militaristic peoples of the region and prolific raiders of their neighbours. It was quickly discovered by both the Bemba and Arab-Swahili traders that economic cooperation, as opposed to conflict, was preferable to both sides and a trade in coastal guns for slaves obtained by the Bemba quickly developed.³⁰⁶ Broadly speaking, the Bemba's access to firearms coincided with a flourishing of their polity. However, the direct role of guns in this success is questionable.³⁰⁷ The Bemba possessed guns from around 1868, according to Andrew Roberts, and were assisted in 1870 by Arab-Swahili gunmen in defeating an Ngoni raid on their land.³⁰⁸ Arguably, it was Tippu Tip's defeat of Nsama III and his Tabwa in 1867, not far from the Bemba's northern border, that showed the potential of firearms for the first time and encouraged their trade. Incidentally, this coincided with a large supply of muzzle-loading guns

³⁰³ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, p. 280 and Willis, *Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. xiv.

³⁰⁴ Moloney, *With Stairs to Katanga*, pp. 49-50 and 57-58.

³⁰⁵ 'Narrative of Said Bin Habeeb, An Arab Inhabitant of Zanzibar', *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, XV (1860), p. 146 and Macola, 'The Warlord's Guns', p. 10.

³⁰⁶ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 160.

³⁰⁷ "Johnston to Lord Rosebery, Report on the First Three Years of the Existence of the British Central African Protectorate", 31st March 1894, FO2/66, pp. 237-238 and Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 127.

³⁰⁸ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 145 and 203.

reaching the world market, as European powers replaced them in their arsenals with breech-loading rifles.³⁰⁹

Roberts contends that in 1883 firearms were still not particularly widespread amongst the Bemba. A royal monopoly may have even existed on their use during this period, but this was soon to change.³¹⁰ In 1884, the Bemba and Arab-Swahili met in battle for the one and only time during this period.³¹¹ The defeat handed down to the Africans by the coastal traders and their firearms appeared to change attitudes towards guns in Ubemba, and, by the 1890s, Roberts claims that guns amongst the Bemba had risen in importance, increasing greatly in number, and that powder had become the highly valued item it was elsewhere in the region.³¹² However, Sharpe witnessed Bemba raids in the early 1890s and claimed that “they (the Bemba) fight with spears and have few guns”.³¹³ This would suggest that, whilst guns were certainly growing in importance in Bemba society during the 1890s, they had yet to reach everyday use in the raids carried out by Bemba war bands.

It is clear from these examples that the arming of African peoples by the Arab-Swahili allowed militaristically-minded chiefs to expand both economically and territorially at the cost of their weaker neighbours.³¹⁴ However, in the long run this reliance by African elites on outsiders was unsustainable as a model of rule, as can be seen with the violent and despotic rule of Msiri in Katanga.³¹⁵

Finally, the importance of firearms in the Arab-Swahili dominance of Mweru-Tanganyika during the nineteenth-century will be considered. It has been widely assumed that the coastal trader’s access to guns was the fundamental reason for their military and economic success in the African interior. However, questions have since been raised as to whether firearms were as effective in this process as initially assumed.

In December 1888, the *Echoes of Service* published a damning indictment of the gun-toting Arab-Swahili trader’s activities.

³⁰⁹ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 202.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

³¹³ Sharpe, ‘A Journey to Garenganze’, p. 37.

³¹⁴ Willis, *Fipa and Related Peoples*, p. xiv.

³¹⁵ Macola, ‘The Warlord’s Guns’, p. 1.

From the east the Arabs carry war and destruction inwards, and having the advantage of firearms do not hesitate to depopulate large portions of the country in order to obtain a few hundred slaves.³¹⁶

Livingstone himself suggested that the power of the Arab-Swahili derived from their ownership of firearms. Writing from near Nsama III's capital in central Itabwa in August 1867, he argued that "They (the Arab-Swahili) bully as much as they please by their firearms" and later, in southern Manyema in November 1870, reported that African residents of the region said "If we encourage the Arabs to trade, they come and kill us with their guns".³¹⁷ Therefore, it is clear that firearms were considered particularly important for the continuing dominance of the region by contemporary European observers.

However, Livingstone did also state that the power of firearms for the Arab-Swahili lay in the fear and the noise they produced.³¹⁸ Lary and Wright have since agreed with this assessment, suggesting that rather than relying upon the actual destructive power of guns, the coastal traders instead used them in displays of military strength and intimidation, rather than direct action.³¹⁹ Livingstone continued by claiming that, once the lack of potency of the Arab-Swahili firearms was realised by the African peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika, much of their mystique and power was actually lost.³²⁰

In *A History of the Bemba*, Andrew Roberts qualified his earlier statements, by agreeing with Lary and Wright. He suggests that their actual military significance was minimal and physical usage relatively rare in comparison to what was initially assumed.³²¹ Lary and Wright suggest that guns provided a minor advantage to traders and nothing more, which realistically was more accurate than assuming guns alone allowed the Arab-Swahili to effectively penetrate and then dominate the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and its resident peoples.³²²

³¹⁶ *Echoes of Service*, no. 204, December 1888, p. 373.

³¹⁷ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 199 and 201 and Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 1, p. 225 and vol. 2, p. 81.

³¹⁸ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 2, p. 150.

³¹⁹ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 550 and Cunnison, 'Kazembe and the Arabs', p. 232.

³²⁰ Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 2, p. 150.

³²¹ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 201.

³²² Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 551.

In his introduction to his edition of the colonially-recorded 'History of Abdullah ibn Suliman', Roberts elaborated on the same idea:

In such processes of infiltration, the possession of guns was not necessarily a more important factor than disputes within chiefly families and the ability of either party to call on reinforcements through a far-flung network of associates.³²³

Therefore, rather than insisting that firearms alone let the coastal traders dominate the region, it is suggested that internal divisions between various African peoples and chiefs allowed the Arab-Swahili to effectively infiltrate Mweru-Tanganyika. Coastal traders took advantage of inter-African tensions and were able to set opposing African royal pretenders against one other, supporting the one who was most likely to provide them with the most advantageous possible trading terms. Thus, with both sides weakened by the ensuing civil war, the Arab-Swahili were able to marginalise the puppet ruler whom they had brought to the throne, to the point where the country was effectively under their control.³²⁴ This introduced a new pattern of political behaviour whereby African royal pretenders began to rely upon outside assistance to force their way onto the throne.³²⁵

This process can be observed in the nineteenth-century political history of the Eastern Lunda polity of *Kazembe*, with the Arab-Swahili being the first external group to enter the kingdom with any political efficacy. Lunda nobles began to rely on political alliances with Arab-Swahili traders to gain access to the throne, as Cunnison explained, "Without a willing external force, like that of the Arabs, no Lunda prince gained kingship by rebellion".³²⁶ Lary and Wright rather accurately sum up the entire situation when they suggest that guns won battles for the Arab-Swahili, but it was skilled internal politicking that won the wars.³²⁷

Firearms did undoubtedly play a role in the Arab-Swahili penetration and takeover of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor. They were used extensively by both the Arab-Swahili themselves and the various African peoples they traded with. Firearms

³²³ Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 242.

³²⁴ Cunnison, 'Kazembe and the Arabs', p. 232 and 233.

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 235.

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 237.

³²⁷ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 555.

certainly helped extend the lifespan of the slave trade in East-Central Africa and allowed militaristically-minded chiefs and paramounts to expand their own powerbases at the expense of their neighbours. Some Central African polities, such as the Bemba's, benefited greatly from their military and economic interaction with the coastal traders and found a ready outlet for the slaves and other resources that they gathered in their raids on the surrounding countries.

However, guns cannot be viewed as solely responsible for the success of the Arab-Swahili in Mweru-Tanganyika during the nineteenth-century. Internal divisions between the various peoples and chiefs infiltrated by the coastal traders proved to be just as important in their occupation of the region as the use of firearms. Therefore, the reasons behind the dominance of the region by coastal traders can be seen as multifaceted, with the effect of the combined factors far more important than the effect of any single aspect.

3.3 Conflict in Mweru-Tanganyika – A Military Revolution?

The final section of this chapter will discuss Reid's assertion that Central Africa, with the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor as a perfect microcosm, experienced a "military revolution" during the nineteenth-century. War and conflict were endemic to Mweru-Tanganyika and it is largely agreed by contemporary observers and modern historians that violence held back the development of the region as much as, if not more than, the slave trade. Alfred Sharpe described the effects of the violence thus: "Hitherto war, the African bugbear, has prevented any development in these regions".³²⁸

Reid defines his term "military revolution" as the deployment of organised violence and coercion for economic and political means and seems to present intrusive groups, such as the Arab-Swahili, as the main agents of this "revolution".³²⁹ He sees war and conflict during this era as driven by the dual aims of controlling resources and labour and maximising production, and argues that this struggle was one of the greatest causes of conflict in Africa.³³⁰

³²⁸ Burton, *The Lands of Cazembe*, vol. 2, p. 310, *Echoes of Service*, no. 195, March 1888, p. 88 and Sharpe, 'A Journey to Garenganze', p. 47.

³²⁹ Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 5 and 108.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5 and 3.

This “military revolution” was driven by demographic and environmental shifts, but more importantly, by “the advance of the global commercial frontier in the form of the long-distance trade”³³¹ In other words, Reid’s “revolution” was caused by the incorporation of East-Central Africa into the world economy and the fact that, in order to meet the demands of global markets, intrusive groups of coastal traders began to use violence to control the commercial resources of the region, beginning with slaves and ivory. By controlling these resources and the region’s people and maximising their productive capacity, the Arab-Swahili were able to profit as the middlemen in a trade that stretched from the “elephant marshes” of Lake Mweru to the drawing rooms of the British gentry.

However, in order to economically benefit as they did, the Arab-Swahili were forced to introduce new patterns of organised violence and coercion to Mweru-Tanganyika which definitively changed ideas of military organisation amongst the peoples of Central Africa, often to their detriment. The “military revolution” was grounded firmly in the lake regions of East-Central Africa and the peoples that dwelled there, but it was entirely dependent upon external factors from the global economy. The Arab-Swahili were simply the agents of this “revolution”, linking worldwide commercial demands to the resource-rich lands of Central Africa, employing coercive violence in the latter to satisfy the former.

As Reid writes:

(The “military revolution”) was the outcome of the new era of economic relations with the West ... (whereby) the so-called illegal slave trade perpetuated and intensified earlier patterns of organised violence ... leading to new military and political forms.³³²

In light of the above, Reid’s theory of a “military revolution” in Central Africa in the nineteenth-century seems to perfectly encapsulate and describe Arab-Swahili activities in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor at this time. In response to the developing demands of the global economy, the traders used violence and the threat of it to control the peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika and maximise the production of

³³¹ Reid, *Warfare in African History*, p. 108.

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

slaves, ivory, salt and other commodities that they then exported out of the African continent.

Based as it was on exploitation, the entire system was unsustainable and the violence used against the peoples of the region did indeed hinder Arab-Swahili trade as much as it created and maintained it.³³³ By the time of the European colonisation of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in the 1880s and 1890s, commodities were becoming scarce, the population had evolved to fight the violence that struck at them daily, and the traders themselves commanded loyalty only out of fear or through ample financial rewards for their supporters. Indeed, many African chiefs who had prospered under the Arab-Swahili began to switch their allegiance to the European colonialists who provided them with both greater economic benefits and protection from vengeful coastal traders.

African agency is an important factor in Reid's theory, providing the link between the Arab-Swahili and peoples of East-Central Africa that allowed the "military revolution" to occur. If the coastal traders had not been able to insinuate themselves into regional patterns of commercial exchange, pioneered by groups such as the Nyamwezi, it is doubtful whether the "revolution" would have ever taken place.

With the arrival of the long-distance trade, traditional political elites found their power increasingly diminished as the coastal traders began to monopolise networks of commercial exchange previously controlled by paramount chiefs. Once ensconced in the region, the Arab-Swahili were able to use their heavily-armed *ruga-ruga* dependents to maintain their new gained mercantile supremacy and enter the political sphere, aiming to take control of the production of the commodities they were exporting from the interior. This was Reid's "military revolution" in action. The coastal traders penetrated Mweru-Tanganyika along established regional trade networks with the assistance of African mercantile peoples, only to move from simple trade to the establishment of political control through the use of violence, in order to achieve economic and political domination.

Reid's theory, whilst acknowledging earlier patterns of violence in the region, does cast sufficient light on the socio-political situation that the coastal traders

³³³ Reid, *Warfare in African History*, pp. 118-119.

encountered in the interior in general, and Mweru-Tanganyika in particular, in the nineteenth-century. This situation was characterised by deep divisions and vicious rivalries. Andrew Roberts says as much in his *History of the Bemba*, arguing that the traders exploited pre-existing divisions amongst the Tabwa, for example, whilst allying themselves with strong local leaders, such as the *Chitimukulu* of the Bemba, a description echoed by Lary and Wright.³³⁴

While these considerations do not invalidate Reid's theory of "military revolution", it is important to remember that the Arab-Swahili were not just intrusive traders willing to use violence and coercion to further their own economic gains; they were also kindling to the already blazing flames of internal conflict in the region, as described in the *Echoes of Service* in August 1894.³³⁵ A "military revolution" did indeed occur in Central Africa during this period, and the Arab-Swahili and mercantile African peoples were certainly the agents of this transformation. However, the internal discord between many of the peoples and chiefs of Mweru-Tanganyika prevented them from being able to withstand the intrusion of the traders and combat their forcible entrance into Central African politics.

The civil wars and internecine rivalries of Mweru-Tanganyika were certainly a major factor in the Arab-Swahili domination of the region. The coastal traders were able to penetrate the region, presenting themselves as powerful potential allies to the chiefs of Mweru-Tanganyika against their rivals, which only encouraged further conflict. In turn, this conflict stimulated further interaction between the African elites and coastal traders, as the chiefs sought to maintain their advantage over their neighbours by employing the Arab-Swahili as mercenaries or trading with them for firearms. Both of these eventualities economically benefited the traders whilst simultaneously weakening the political elites of the region

With regards to the early years of the Arab-Swahili entrance into the region, Lary and Wright's analogy of the coastal traders as land-based examples of the British gun-boat diplomacy is not far from the truth.³³⁶ The Arab-Swahili were well-armed, politically savvy traders, directing the peoples of Mweru-Tanganyika in routes favourable to themselves, only interfering when absolutely necessary to maintain

³³⁴ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 160 and Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 555.

³³⁵ *Echoes of Service*, no. 316, August 1894, p. 198.

³³⁶ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 554.

their dominance. Even Tippu Tip, who pioneered Arab-Swahili interventionist tactics, would not randomly engage in conflict with African chiefs and headmen without a specific reason to do so. He attacked Nsama III to end the chief's opposition to coastal trading activities in the region, proving that internal division certainly had a part to play in the "military revolution" theorised by Reid.

In conclusion, Reid's theory of a "military revolution" in Central Africa during this period can be viewed directly in the actions of the Arab-Swahili traders in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor. In Mweru-Tanganyika, the Arab-Swahili certainly used coercion and violence to further their own political and economic ends. However, it is clear that the discord-riven lands of the Corridor were a perfect place for intrusive groups to penetrate and slowly dominate over time. The Arab-Swahili may have had a far more difficult route to domination than they did, if the people of the region had been unified behind strong leadership rather than scattered and quarrelsome. Crawford summed up the situation amongst the African peoples of the region upon the arrival of the Arab-Swahili most accurately with his description of who the true enemies of the Africans were.

As everywhere so here, the greatest enemies of the black men are internal – first the enemy of his own heart, then the enemy of his own household, and anon the enemy of the next hut. And so African tribes are consumed one of another.³³⁷

³³⁷ *Echoes of Service*, no. 352, February 1896, p. 55.

4. “Civilisation is killing out the old ... ways of the land”³³⁸ - The Arab-Swahili and European Colonial Administrations, 1880s – c. 1900

This final chapter will discuss the last two decades of the nineteenth-century in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and the relationships between the newly-arrived European colonial representatives and the entrenched Arab-Swahili traders in the region. Prior to the 1880s, Europeans had not been absent from the interior of Central Africa, as proved by the diaries and travelogues of early Portuguese explorers and British travellers and missionaries such as Livingstone and Burton. In truth, though, these early visitors had been little more than observers of the activities of the Arab-Swahili and their influence upon the peoples of the region had been, at most, transitory.³³⁹

However, the final twenty years of the 1800s saw Europeans enter Mweru-Tanganyika and its surrounding districts, with the idea of colonisation for the first time. This naturally brought them into conflict with the Arab-Swahili of the Corridor, who had arguably already colonised this region of East-Central Africa. The British, Germans and the C.F.S. all encroached on Mweru-Tanganyika during this period, ostensibly with the goal of ending the slave trade prevalent in the region.³⁴⁰ However, more realistically, the Europeans were also drawn by the potential of great commercial wealth.

Conflict was inevitable and the *ruga-ruga*, as the main instruments of Arab-Swahili will, caused great problems for the Europeans. The arrival of European colonial representatives in the region swiftly diminished Arab-Swahili power and control, and the *ruga-ruga* were used to fight officials of the British, Belgian and German

³³⁸ *Echoes of Service: A Record of Labour for the Lord in Many Lands*, no. 368, October 1896, p. 346.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 313, July 1894, p. 161.

³⁴⁰ Hore, E.C., *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa (2nd Ed.)* (Edward Stanford, London, 1892), p. 5 and Livingstone, D. [Waller, H. (ed.)], *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa. From Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-Five to his Death, Continued by a Narrative of his Last Moments and Sufferings, Obtained from his Faithful Servants Chuma and Susi* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1875), vol. 1, p. 93 and p. 222.

administrations in an attempt to reinforce the dissolving coastal dominance in Mweru-Tanganyika. Despite their ruthlessness, arsenals of firearms, skill at arms and military organisation, the *ruga-ruga* could not stand up to the trained and disciplined opposition provided by the colonial forces employed by European officials.³⁴¹ Whilst they initially represented a potential threat to colonial administrators, the *ruga-ruga* as an effective, organised military force ceased to exist with the end of Arab-Swahili dominance of the region.³⁴² The Germans even resorted to actively hunting down the roving bands of *ruga-ruga* as part of their operations to expel the coastal traders from East-Central Africa.³⁴³

With their previous mercenary role at an end, the *ruga-ruga* began to resort to petty banditry or drifted into the employ of the various European colonial entities as porters or mercenaries, in much the same way as they had entered the service of coastal traders.³⁴⁴ According to the British South Africa Company's collector in Mweru-Tanganyika, Dr A. Blair Watson stationed at Kalungwishi on the eastern shore of Lake Mweru since 1893, the *ruga-ruga* remained very well-armed despite their fall from grace, but promised British officials that their days of lawlessness were behind them.³⁴⁵ However, as Allen Roberts notes, they were entirely mercenary and effectively uncontrollable by European administrations.³⁴⁶ The only way that they had previously been kept in line by the Arab-Swahili was through a system of Koranic discipline which was merciless to disobedience and disloyalty. The *ruga-ruga* famously only obeyed those that they respected and feared and, therefore, generally ignored the orders and dictates of minor colonial officials, particularly if they were inexperienced or had little reputation in the region.³⁴⁷ It is for this reason that traders such as Nshimba of Kilwa Island developed such fearsome reputations, as they had

³⁴¹ Musambachime, M.C., *A Reconstructed Biography of an East African Trader: Nshimba of Kilwa Island in the South-West Corner of Lake Mweru, Zambia* (Unpublished Work, University of Zambia), p. 8 and Swann, A.J. (with Johnston H.H.), *Fighting the Slave-Hunters in Central Africa: A Record of Twenty-Six Years of Travel and Adventure Round the Great Lakes and of the Overthrow of Tip-Pu-Tib, Rumaliza and Other Great Slave Traders* (J.B. Lippincott Co./Seeley and Co. Ltd., Philadelphia/London, 1910), p. 96.

³⁴² Roberts, A.F., *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013), p. 42 and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 41.

³⁴³ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, pp. 178-179.

³⁴⁴ Willis, R.G., *East Central Africa Part XV: The Fipa and Related Peoples of South-West Tanzania and North-East Zambia* (International African Institute, London, 1966), p. xv and *Echoes of Service*, no. 313, July 1894, p. 166.

³⁴⁵ Blair Watson, A., 'The Occupation of Kilwa Island', *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Lusaka, 1956), p. 72.

³⁴⁶ Roberts, *Dance of Assassins*, p. 137.

³⁴⁷ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 27.

to appear even more daunting to their own minions than to the peoples they were preying upon.

This conflict came to dominate the new European colonies in and around Mweru-Tanganyika, and much of what will be examined below is the tit-for-tat process of small skirmishes between *ruga-ruga* and colonial police forces, with the traders attempting to hold on to their lands in the region and the Europeans lacking the strength to completely remove the Arab-Swahili from East-Central Africa once and for all.

In exploring the relationship between the Arab-Swahili and the European colonial powers, two main case studies will be examined. The first example will be the more peaceful and economically-centred interaction between the B.C.A.P. of Johnston and Sharpe and the traders of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor, consisting of men of the el-Murjebi clique under Abdullah ibn Suliman and several independent traders such as Kabunda. The second example will be the violent “anti-slavery” and occupation campaigns of the C.F.S. in Katanga and also against Nshimba on Lake Mweru, under officers such as Captain Clément Brasseur, Captain William Stairs, Lieutenant Legat, Captain Descamps and Lieutenant Duvivier,

The most important sources for this period are the records of both the Plymouth Brethren missionary society, as published in their in-house journal, *The Echoes of Service*, and the B.C.A.P., specifically its correspondence with the central government and Foreign Office in London.

4.1 The Arab-Swahili and the British Central African Administration

The British had long been among the most enthusiastic visitors to and explorers of East-Central Africa during the nineteenth-century. Even today, names such as Livingstone, Burton, Thomson and Crawford have come to define Central Africa in the minds of many British people. However, it is important to remember that most of these early travellers and missionaries reached Central Africa before any direct British political involvement in the region. Thus, they were little more than observers of events over which they had no influence.

The Berlin Conference of 1884-5 set out the broad spheres of influence of the European powers in Central Africa. The British sphere extended from the south, in present-day Zimbabwe and southern Zambia, into a salient caught between the Portuguese across Lake Nyasa in Mozambique in the east, the Germans in present-day Tanzania to the north and the C.F.S. in Manyema to the north of Lake Mweru and Katanga to the west of the Luapula River.

The businessman Cecil Rhodes obtained a Charter to found the B.S.A.C. in 1889 and was soon convinced to fund an operation in Nyasaland to combat the Arab-Swahili slave trade.³⁴⁸ He swiftly employed the consul Johnston as the first High Commissioner of the protectorate itself, and the administration was created over two years until its eventual ratification in 1891.³⁴⁹ As Johnston was both an employee of the British Foreign Office and an agent of Rhodes' B.S.A.C., the B.C.A.P. was legitimised by the British government but in reality funded by the B.S.A.C.³⁵⁰ This territory north of the Zambesi River was then divided in two, the first half, roughly corresponding to present-day Malawi, being administered by the Government without B.S.A.C. intervention, whilst the second half to the west of the protectorate would be "developed and exploited" by the Company, with Johnston as a supervisor over proceedings.³⁵¹ In addition, Johnston had command of the Company's armed forces north of the Zambesi, being able to use them as he pleased. These men formed the basis of the colonial police forces that will be referred to below.³⁵²

Mweru-Tanganyika lay in this second area of land and therefore came under the purview of the B.S.A.C., whilst still being effectively headed by Johnston and his assistants. Johnston spent much of the 1890s consolidating both the government's and Company's position in the region which meant dealing with the long-established dominance of the Arab-Swahili in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and their violent slave trading activities.

³⁴⁸ Hanna, A.J., *The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia 1859-95*, (Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 140.

³⁴⁹ Roberts, A.D., *A History of Zambia* (Heinemann, London, 1976), p. 163, Macola, G., *The Kingdom of Kazembe: History and Politics in North-eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950* (LIT Verlag, Hamburg, 2002), p. 161 and Hanna, *Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia*, p. 174.

³⁵⁰ Hanna, *Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia*, pp. 179-181.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

This territorial administrative division lasted until 1895, when spiralling costs and a lack of direct control over Johnston's actions and spending saw Rhodes and the B.S.A.C split from Nyasaland, removing company involvement in the protectorate completely. They sought to focus their resources upon the region that they had always held sway over which, by this point, was well on the way towards becoming Northern Rhodesia.³⁵³

As can be seen from the creation of the B.C.A.P., British policy in the colonisation of the region differed greatly from that of neighbouring colonial powers. The relative administrative independence of the B.C.A.P. from the central government in London meant that Johnston, whilst holding a government post, acted largely as agent of the B.S.A.C., with the government in London only intervening if the colony became hugely profitable, taxes were not being paid or it no longer swore fealty to the British crown. Elise Trivier greatly admired the British method for relying upon the Company to fund the B.C.A.P. making it very cheap to administer, in comparison to the expensive and complicated administrations of the colonies of other European powers such as the French, Belgians and Germans.³⁵⁴

An example of this privatisation of colonialism, favoured by the British administration, can be seen with the A.L.C., which was formed in 1877 by the Glaswegian businessmen, John and Frederick Moir. This private mercantile enterprise had links to the Scottish religious establishment but operated commercially rather than philanthropically in the British sphere of influence in East-Central Africa. In addition to its main focus of carrying out trade and transportation of commodities on the lakes of East-Central Africa, the company acted alongside agents of the B.C.A.P. and B.S.A.C. in their shared aims of enhancing European influence in Central Africa, combating the slave trade and assisting the British missions in the region.³⁵⁵ This allowed the administrators of British Central Africa to simultaneously expand British influence in the region whilst keeping the costs required to run the protectorate within the tight budget they had available.

³⁵³ Hanna, *Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia*, pp. 264-265.

³⁵⁴ Trivier, E., *Mon Voyage au Continent Noir: Le "Gironde" en Afrique* (G. Gounouilhou, Paris/Bordeaux, 1891), pp. 296-297.

³⁵⁵ Hanna, *Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia*, pp. 20-23 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 310, May 1894, p. 127.

The sway of Arab-Swahili slave traders presented a most difficult challenge to early British administrators in the region, who were expected to establish their dominance over the Arab-Swahili, ending their slave trading for both moral reasons and to limit the coastal trader's economic capabilities, but who did not have the funds, equipment or manpower to face the traders in open war.³⁵⁶ Therefore, a gradual policy of removing the Arab-Swahili through economic pressure was adopted, so that the B.C.A.P. could simultaneously flourish.³⁵⁷ Declé echoed this idea when he stated that "it is not by force that (the slave trade) will be suppressed but by the introduction of commerce", while Trivier stated that only the British method was truly effective in ending the slave trade.³⁵⁸

This idea came to define B.C.A.P. policy. Johnston himself was of the opinion that,

The presence of Arabs is incompatible with the introduction of European civilisation and sooner or later the Arabs must go from Central Africa ... It may be possible to govern them on the East Coast ... (but) in the interior of Africa they are adventurers, and ordinarily adventurers of the worst type.³⁵⁹

Yet Sharpe, Johnston's second-in-command and replacement as commissioner in 1896, was far more cautious, writing repeatedly to Johnston regarding the need to maintain a peaceful approach to the Arab-Swahili traders.

Are we prepared to control and administer this portion of British Central Africa without expecting any appreciable amount of revenue for many years to come? If we are not, then we had better leave it alone at once and for all, and allow the Arabs to continue their unpleasant work, and have no friction with them ... There is much work to do in controlling the coast men and semi-Arabs, and re-establishing the idea of security and justice in the country. Abdullah's power is nothing great in Itabwa, but I do not think we should at the first openly oppose him. I have no doubt whatever that if a strong government

³⁵⁶ Glave, E.J., 'Glave in the Heart of Africa: Peace and War between Lakes Bangweolo and Tanganyika (From the Journals of the Late E.J. Glave)', *The Century Magazine* (New York, August/September 1894), p. 928.

³⁵⁷ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, p. 279, Baxter, T.W., 'Slave-Raiders in North-Eastern Rhodesia', *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Lusaka, 1950), p. 7 and Roberts, A.D., *A History of the Bemba: Political Growth and change in the north-eastern Zambia before 1900* (Longman, London, 1973), p. 236.

³⁵⁸ Declé, L. (with Stanley, H.M.), *Three Years in Savage Africa* (Methuen and Co., London, 1898), p. 307 and Trivier, *Continent Noir*, p. 291.

³⁵⁹ "Johnston to Lord Rosebery, Report on the First Three Years of the Existence of the British Central African Protectorate", 31st March 1894, National Archives of the United Kingdom at Kew, FO2/66, p. 246.

station were established in Mweru it would quickly draw a large native population round it and that such a station would soon be able to control the Itabwa Arabs without having to resort to any violent measures.³⁶⁰

In Itabwa we (if we do anything at all) must gradually strengthen our position, and not oppose the Arabs until we are quite able to get the best of them. It would not take long.³⁶¹

(The Arabs) had no ill feelings against us at all, as long as we leave them alone, but if we endeavour to stop their slaving work ... and we are not strong enough to hold our own against them, they will become dangerous; but (if we do anything in Itabwa) my opinion is that we should not send in any “foreign” force, but should gradually collect a strong native population around our station.³⁶²

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Abdullah ibn Suliman came to Mweru-Tanganyika with Tippu Tip and Kumba Kumba in the 1860s and remained behind as their deputy there through the 1880s and 1890s, after they retired to the coast.³⁶³ By the time of the founding of the B.C.A.P., Abdullah and his lieutenants, such as Nsemiwe Kalangula, Meso and Masala, held Mweru-Tanganyika and many of the surrounding districts in an iron grip. According to Trivier and Sharpe, he ruled from Lake Mweru, in the west, to Kabunda, near Lake Tanganyika, and was able to monopolise the ivory trade in the 1890s, effectively replacing the Nsamas of the Tabwa as “sultan of Itabwa”.³⁶⁴ Even Mpweto at the northern tip of Lake Mweru described himself as “Abdullah’s child”.³⁶⁵ Both Crawford and Sharpe blamed

³⁶⁰ “Sharpe to Johnson”, 17th December 1892, FO2/54, pp. 20-21.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 22.

³⁶² “Sharpe to Johnson”, 17th December 1892, FO2/54, pp. 22-23.

³⁶³ Sharpe, A., ‘Alfred Sharpe’s Travels in the Northern Province and Katanga’, *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Lusaka, 1957), p. 210, Lary, P. and Wright, M., ‘Swahili Settlements in Northern Zambia and Malawi’, *African Historical Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1971), p. 557, Roberts, A.D., ‘The History of Abdullah ibn Suliman’, *African Social Research*, 4 (December 1967), p. 245 and Baxter, ‘Slave-Raiders’, p. 16.

³⁶⁴ Trivier, *Continent Noir*, p. 275, Sharpe, A., ‘A Journey to Garenganze’, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, vol. 14, no. 1 (January 1892), p. 37, Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 558, “Sharpe to Johnston”, 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 20, Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 237 and Roberts, ‘History of Abdullah’, p. 245.

³⁶⁵ Sharpe, ‘A Journey to Garenganze’, p. 41 and Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 557.

Abdullah directly for despoiling Itabwa, saying that he followed exactly in the footsteps of his master, Tippu Tip.³⁶⁶

However, upon meeting the trader, it was largely agreed that he was most helpful to the Europeans and that he seemed to share the opinion of the B.C.A.P. administration that war in the region was undesirable for both sides.³⁶⁷ He confirmed to Trivier that Europeans were in no danger from the Arab-Swahili under his command, saying that “nous ne ferons aucun mal aux blancs ... car nous sommes leurs alliés” (we will not do any harm to whites because we are their allies).³⁶⁸ The French explorer found Abdullah most helpful and an “excellent hôte et ami” (excellent host and friend), with the trader promising Trivier: “je ferai ce que tu voudras” (I will do whatever you want).³⁶⁹ Even Sharpe called him “a pleasant and hospitable Arab” when he passed through in 1890.³⁷⁰

Whilst Abdullah saw the sense in maintaining a peaceful status quo with the British so as to continue trading “legitimate” commodities such as ivory for as long as possible, even asking to be made a semi-autonomous salaried chief for the administration according to Sharpe, many of his subordinates did not respond to the British intrusion into their lands quite so peacefully.³⁷¹ In 1890, there was a brief spell of peace across Itabwa between Abdullah and Nsama VI Mutuka of the Tabwa, which seemed particularly encouraging for the British cause.³⁷² However, less than two years later the Arab-Swahili killed Mutuka after a 90 day siege of his village.³⁷³ This sparked off a series of Tabwa-Arab-Swahili skirmishes, despite the British administration stepping in with a candidate of their own for Nsama, called Mukula, which was intended to reduce Abdullah’s influence in the region and warn him off a continuation of the violence.³⁷⁴ Mukula signed a treaty with the British in November

³⁶⁶ *Echoes of Service*, no. 370, November 1896, p. 345 and “Sharpe to Johnston”, 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 20.

³⁶⁷ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 258.

³⁶⁸ Trivier, *Continent Noir*, p. 289.

³⁶⁹ Trivier, *Continent Noir*, pp. 268-269.

³⁷⁰ Sharpe, ‘A Journey to Garenganze’, p. 37.

³⁷¹ “Sharpe to Johnston”, 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 23.

³⁷² Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 557 and Roberts, ‘History of Abdullah’, p. 245.

³⁷³ Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 558.

³⁷⁴ Lary and Wright, ‘Swahili Settlements’, p. 572 and Roberts, ‘History of Abdullah’, p. 245.

1892, swearing fealty to the Crown in return for its protection against the rampant Arab-Swahili of Abdullah.³⁷⁵

Two years later in 1894, Abdullah's lieutenant, Nsemiwe, entered Mukula's village and tore down the British flag given to the chief by the B.C.A.P. administration and destroyed it. E.J. Glave described the events thus;

Nsemiwe some time ago pulled down the British flag at Mukula's village, danced on it, and asked Mukula where his friends the British were? Worryingham ... sent three messengers to Masala with the idea of opening up communication with the slavers. Masala's people killed one of the three men, ill-treated the other two by flogging, then took all their cartridges away, gave them back their guns, and started them off with insulting and defiant messages to the white men.³⁷⁶

The local British official, F.C. Worryingham, based nearby at Choma was powerless to stop the coastal traders and their provocative actions.³⁷⁷ In retribution, Masala and Nsemiwe were then besieged for fifty days by Descamps and Duvivier of the C.F.S. and Masala was killed as a result, whilst Nsemiwe fled. Glave wrote the most accurate description of the encounter, having passed through the besieging C.F.S. forces himself. The Arab-Swahili were besieged by Duvivier and Descamps along with over 400 C.F.S. soldiers and a single artillery piece. Reinforcements had been sent for from Verdick but the siege lasted only 10 days, finishing before he arrived. In total, there were ten C.F.S. casualties and many more among the Arab-Swahili, Masala included.³⁷⁸ Glave wrote of the siege, "It is the last stand of the slavers in this part of the world". Even with two of his closest supporters effectively at war with the European colonialists, Abdullah refused to be provocative and come to their aid.³⁷⁹

This event proved Sharpe's early assertions that antagonism and war between the British and Arab-Swahili would only be disastrous for both sides. As it was, the

³⁷⁵ "Sharpe to Johnson", 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 30 and "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 2nd January 1893, FO2/54, p. 44.

³⁷⁶ Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 246, Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 239, Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 572 and Glave, 'Heart of Africa', p. 930.

³⁷⁷ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 239 and Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 572.

³⁷⁸ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 572, Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 239, Glave, 'Heart of Africa', p. 928 and pp. 930-931, Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 172, and *Echoes of Service*, no. 332, April 1895, p. 100.

³⁷⁹ Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 246.

British were not strong enough militarily to defend one of their loyal chiefs and lost a member of their staff as a result, whilst the guilty coastal traders suffered a bad defeat at the hands of the C.F.S. in retaliation and lost several of their own men. This was particularly disastrous for the British administration due to the very small number of officials and collectors actually employed by them in the early 1890s. In fact, Johnston described this very small staff perfectly when he estimated to Lord Rosebery that there were no more than 240 white Europeans in the whole of the British sphere of influence by 1894, the vast majority of whom were English or Scottish missionaries.³⁸⁰ The joint realisation that conflict had such negative effects actually served to strengthen British-Arab-Swahili peaceful coexistence for a time, according to Lary and Wright.³⁸¹

Abdullah and his el-Murjebi clique compatriots were not the only coastal traders active in Mweru-Tanganyika during the last decades of the nineteenth-century, with several independent traders also being present in the region. The most prominent of these was the Baluchi trader, Kabunda, who operated out of Sumbu at the southernmost tip of Lake Tanganyika. Kabunda was well-known as a supporter of the British administration and relied on the transport routes of the A.L.C. to trade due to his isolated position.³⁸² Sharpe recognised the trader's isolation and potential as an ally to the British, writing of him,

Kabunda will not, I think, ever give ... trouble to us. He is getting old and feels his day for freebooting is over. Moreover he, not being an Arab, is not on good terms with Tippu Tip's people, and he has no allies.³⁸³

According to Lary and Wright, Kabunda was the only trader in the region who came close to threatening the influence of Abdullah and the remaining el-Murjebi clique but he died in 1894, making his overall impact on the region at the time insubstantial.³⁸⁴

Around 1895, there was a definite shift in the balance of power in Mweru-Tanganyika with the British finally beginning their ascendancy to dominance after decidedly

³⁸⁰ "Johnston to Lord Rosebery, Report on the First Three Years of the Existence of the British Central African Protectorate", 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 247.

³⁸¹ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 572.

³⁸² Hore, *Tanganyika*, p. 235, "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 31st August 1893, FO2/54, p. 392 and Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 558.

³⁸³ "Sharpe to Johnston", 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 31.

³⁸⁴ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 559 and Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 239.

mixed success in the first few years of the protectorate. The key to the success of the B.C.A.P. against the Arab-Swahili during the middle years of the 1890s was the application of devastating commercial pressure, as suggested by Swann in the early 1890s, which stifled both the trade of the Arab-Swahili and their ability to obtain firearms and ammunition with which to maintain their dominance of Mweru-Tanganyika. This successful policy of economic strangulation was only helped by the downfall of two of the most influential traders left in East-Central Africa, Rumaliza and Nshimba, and the weakening of Arab-Swahili political control that this brought with it.

Rumaliza was finally defeated by the C.F.S. in 1894 and begged the British to allow him to stay in the protectorate. However, they refused and sent him back to Zanzibar to avoid further violence. Alfred Swann wrote something of an epitaph to Rumaliza's career in East-Central Africa,

He was crushed together with all the vile hordes which for so many years had struck terror into the hearts of Africans. Civilisation had triumphed.³⁸⁵

The first method of economic control employed by the B.C.A.P. was to stifle Arab-Swahili slave exports out of Mweru-Tanganyika with strategically placed stations such as Kalungwishi and Rhodesia, manned by Anglo-Indian and Sikh policemen from British India, who numbered around 200 by 1893.³⁸⁶ This forced the coastal traders to rely upon the British markets, at Abercorn for example, to sell their ivory stocks, with all alternative routes closed to them.³⁸⁷ The British station at Abercorn, near the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, was very much the linchpin in this strategy, located as it was near the lake shore, in the corridor between Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika, on the main caravan route east towards the coastal markets and on the border with the German East African colony.³⁸⁸

The Germans and C.F.S. had reduced the avenues of trade for the Arab-Swahili to such an extent that the British in the south of Tanganyika represented the only

³⁸⁵ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, pp. 272-274 and "Marshall to Johnston", 7th May 1894, FO2/68, pp.154-155.

³⁸⁶ "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 12th June 1893, FO2/54, p. 276.

³⁸⁷ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, p. 246 and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 38.

³⁸⁸ "Sharpe to Johnston", 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 32, "Johnston to the Foreign Office", 12th June 1893, FO2/54, p. 276, "Sharpe to Johnston", 16th May 1893, FO2/56, pp. 107-111 and Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 240.

potential friendly European trading partner in the entire region. Sharpe wrote to Johnston of this situation and of the importance and success of Abercorn in pressuring the coastal traders economically and forcing them to rely on the British as the only outlet for their goods. He called Abercorn “one of the most hopeful spots in British Central Africa” and said that it was doing more trade than any of the other stations in British Central Africa combined by 1893/94. The only reason that Sharpe could think of as to why the British were not taking the entire ivory trade in the region through Abercorn was because the Arab-Swahili were worried about transporting large amounts of ivory south along Lake Tanganyika with its tempestuous waters.³⁸⁹

This policy of economic pressure upon the Arab-Swahili was only one facet of the British strategy in dealing with the coastal traders in Mweru-Tanganyika. The other aspect was the control and limitation of the Arab-Swahili importation of firearms and gunpowder into the interior. Between 1893 and 1895, the Arab-Swahili sought to import vast amounts of guns and powder into the interior from the coast, in the hope of arresting their decline in power and continuing the slave trade.³⁹⁰ In 1894, the British Foreign Minister, Lord Kimberley, banned the private importation of firearms into the B.C.A.P. and allowed the officials therein to both confiscate and enforce the payment of duties and fines upon any illicit contraband found, almost exclusively in Arab-Swahili possession.³⁹¹ This soon resulted in a great scarcity in powder across British Central Africa.³⁹²

In response, the Arab-Swahili stepped up the movement of large amounts of gunpowder into the interior, attempting to outrun the British customs patrols. Rimaliza imported 17 guns and 1500 bullets to fight the C.F.S. in 1893, whilst other traders such as Teleka, Divani, Mwasamusa, Mabruki and Hasman smuggled powder into the B.C.A.P. throughout 1894.³⁹³ Teleka initially brought 1100lbs of powder, Mwasamusa another 60 kegs and Hasman, Mabruki and Divani a further 56 kegs and 400 lbs of powder into the region, representing a very real potential threat

³⁸⁹ “Sharpe to Johnston”, 17th December 1892, FO2/54, p. 17 and p. 34.

³⁹⁰ “Glave to Johnston”, 31st March 1894, FO2/66, p. 284.

³⁹¹ “Johnston to Sharpe”, 3rd August 1894, , FO2/65, pp. 79-80.

³⁹² “Sharpe to Johnston”, 11th June 1894, FO2/66, p. 324.

³⁹³ “Foreign Office to Johnston”, 20th February 1893, FO2/53, p. 19, “Crawshay to Johnston”, 30th June 1893, FO2/54, p. 352, “Crawshay to Sharpe”, 20th April 1894, FO2/66, p. 286, “Sharpe to German Officials”, 21st April 1894, FO2/66, p. 329

to the British and their operations to break the Arab-Swahili stranglehold on the land.³⁹⁴

It was quickly realised that the Germans were complicit in this arms dealing and even actively assisted the Arab-Swahili in moving the powder. Whether this was an attempt to destabilise the B.C.A.P. or more simply driven by greed, it was estimated that the Germans directly helped to import at least 110 kegs of powder into the protectorate.³⁹⁵ Sharpe wrote several letters to Johnston regarding the German complicity and quite brazenly accused them of it in official government documents.

If only European powers were united for the general good of Africa they would take measures to prevent any more guns or gunpowder from coming into the hands of Arabs ... Germany has commenced by selling powder very largely to the Arabs ... deliberately furnishing the slave traders with the means of reviving their struggle against an anti-slave government.³⁹⁶

This betrayal by their erstwhile European compatriots seemed to spur the officials of the B.C.A.P. into action and they stepped up the collection of duties and confiscations of Arab-Swahili contraband across the region. Sharpe demanded this of many coastal-traders in the region in 1894, whilst H.C. Marshall, the British Judicial Officer stationed at Abercorn, was able to enforce the duties on Teleka to such an extent that he repeatedly paid the duty he was required to without actually having it demanded off him by British officials.³⁹⁷ In 1894 alone, Teleka voluntarily paid 25 kegs of powder as import duty to the British.³⁹⁸

This was realistically the beginning of the end for the Arab-Swahili in the British sphere. Without their firearms and being forced to rely upon the British for continued trade, the coastal traders were ripe to be expunged once and for all and the B.C.A.P. officials took the opportunity. Johnston and Fotheringham began military operations

³⁹⁴ "Kerr Cross to Sharpe", 21st May 1894, FO2/66, pp. 330-331.

³⁹⁵ "Johnston to Sharpe", 26th August 1893, FO2/54, p. 367, "Johnston to Sharpe", 27th December 1893, FO2/54, p. 400, "Sharpe to Johnston", 11th June 1894, FO2/66, p. 325 and "Sharpe to German Officials", 11th June 1894, FO2/66, p. 332.

³⁹⁶ "Sharpe to Johnston, List of Measures to Counter Arms Importation into British Central Africa", 19th July 1894, FO2/67, pp. 100-101.

³⁹⁷ "Sharpe to Hill", 8th August 1894, FO2/67, p. 131 and "Sharpe to the Foreign Office", 20th September 1894, FO2/67, p. 242.

³⁹⁸ "Marshall to Johnston", 7th May 1894, FO2/68, pp.153-154.

against the remaining Arab-Swahili, which were continued by Sharpe and his assistants following Johnston's retirement from Central Africa in 1896.³⁹⁹

British officers, including J.M. Bell, Hector C. Croad, Andrew Law, Robert Codrington, H.T. Harrington, Robert Young, J. Drysdale, Richard Crawshay, Major P.W. Forbes and Charles McKinnon, led assaults on the remaining Arab-Swahili through the second half of the 1890s, killing at least 35 coastal slavers, including Hamadi and Hashim ibn Hamedi and Nasoro ibn Suliman (Chisesa), freeing over 100 slaves and capturing in excess of 1000lbs of ivory.⁴⁰⁰

By this point, Abdullah ibn Suliman had fully recognised the British control of the region and entered the administration as a loyal regional chief so as to remain in his lands in Mweru-Tanganyika and continue trading, even if on a limited scale. In 1899, Nasoro ibn Suliman was attacked by B.C.A.P. officials and Abdullah was warned not to assist his fellow trader. Abdullah went one better and in fact handed over the troublesome "die-hards" to the British, ending the Arab-Swahili presence in Mweru-Tanganyika. However, Harrington grandiosely claimed to be "the means of forcing the last of the Arab slave traders to give himself up in North-Eastern Rhodesia" for his part in this defeat of Nasoro.⁴⁰¹

4.2 The Arab-Swahili and the C.F.S.

The C.F.S. was a privately-controlled state owned by King Leopold II of Belgium, created in 1885 and encompassing much of the area of the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo. Its territory stretched as far east as the western shoreline of Lake Tanganyika, south-east to the town of Mpweto on the northern tip of Lake Mweru, and south into Katanga and the land west of the Luapula River.⁴⁰² Therefore, it shared relatively extensive borders with the British sphere of influence in East-Central Africa and also had a presence in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor during the last decade of the nineteenth-century.

³⁹⁹ Swann, *Fighting the Slave-Hunters*, p. 277 and Gamwell, 'A History of Abercorn', p. 519.

⁴⁰⁰ Roberts, *History of the Bemba*, p. 273, Baxter, 'Slave-Raiders', pp. 8-15,

⁴⁰¹ Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 573, Roberts, 'History of Abdullah', p. 246, Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 164, Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah*, p. 232 and Harrington, H.T. (Chiana), 'The Taming of North-Eastern Rhodesia', *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, vol. 2, no. 3 (Lusaka, 1954), pp. 10-12.

⁴⁰² Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 162 and Roberts, *History of Zambia*, p. 162.

As it covered such a huge area of land, the C.F.S. had numerous encounters with Arab-Swahili traders throughout its territory. However, this section will focus more precisely upon the interactions between officials of the C.F.S. and coastal traders, most notably Nshimba of Kilwa Island, in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and its immediate surroundings.

In comparison to the more measured and peaceful method used by the British administration to oust the Arab-Swahili from their sphere of influence, the tactics employed by the C.F.S. were positively vicious and predicated upon the willingness to use extreme levels of violence against any person or group in the region who they came into conflict with. This was true of anyone the C.F.S. officers believed guilty of being involved in the slave trade and, especially, of exporting the natural resources (ivory included) which the State had claimed as its own.

For many European observers, this method was exactly what was required in East-Central Africa to combat the Arab-Swahili. Glave and Moloney were both supporters of these proactive methods and Glave wrote in August 1894 that,

The Belgians are ... displaying such zeal in removing the lawless influences in the land. The Belgian policy is ... thoroughly antislavery. Within the last few years they have done wonders.⁴⁰³

Moloney was the medical officer on Stairs' C.F.S. expedition of 1887-1892 and was certainly of the opinion that slavery had to be forced into extinction through violent means as opposed to the politico-economic B.C.A.P. method. He wrote,

My own impression is that you cannot abolish an immemorial custom like slavery by the stroke of the pen ... the Arabs hold on Africa is far firmer than (imagined) ... and as he is both ready and willing to fight for his own; the dislodgement cannot be effected as you flick a caterpillar from a wall.⁴⁰⁴

However, many also saw the violent methods of the C.F.S. as no better than the Arab-Swahili and other slave traders they came to remove. For example, Declé called the C.F.S. and their methods "detestable" and wrote that their military

⁴⁰³ Glave, 'Heart of Africa', p. 927.

⁴⁰⁴ Moloney, J.A., *With Captain Stairs to Katanga: Slavery and subjugation in the Congo 1891-92* (Sampson Low, Manston & Co. Ltd, London, 1893), p. 30 and p. 90.

operations were “little better than the worst raids of the slave-dealing Arabs”.⁴⁰⁵ Johnston also described their displays of wanton violence with disgust in a letter to the British Foreign Office.

As often as not the “slave trader” is a harmless native chief who has not however given in his allegiance to the Congo Free State ... the recent proceedings of the officers of the Congo Free State ... hardly differ in character from the slave raids which they came to abolish on the part of the Arab.⁴⁰⁶

One of the worst practices used by the C.F.S. in the region was the “sentry system” of leaving one or two-man posts at African villages as “collectors”. These sentries developed into iron-fisted despots with their own little fiefdoms of villages which they could exploit and abuse for their own gain.⁴⁰⁷

The C.F.S. first entered the region with expeditions to Msiri’s *Garenganze* kingdom and its capital, Bunkeya, in 1890. According to Moloney, the expeditions aimed to subjugate Msiri and gain access to Katanga’s rich mineral deposits, such as copper, but the first C.F.S. officer at Bunkeya, Lieutenant Paul Le Marinel, claimed the Belgians to only have peaceful intentions.⁴⁰⁸ As would soon be seen, the C.F.S.’s peaceful intentions in Katanga would not last long.

Le Marinel, Descamps, Legat and E. Verdick were joined at Bunkeya in October 1890 by another expedition led by Captain Alexandre (Pierre) Delcommune, with subordinates including Lieutenant Hakansson and Dr Briard. Stairs then arrived with his subordinates, Captain Omer Bodson, Thomas Robinson, Dr Joseph Moloney and the Marquis Christian de Bonchamps, and a 350 man expedition in December of the same year.⁴⁰⁹ The C.F.S. forces in *Garenganze* by this point numbered in the high hundreds and looked more like an occupation force than a group of peaceful

⁴⁰⁵ Declé, *Savage Africa*, pp. 528-529.

⁴⁰⁶ “Johnston to the Foreign Office”, 17th October 1893, FO2/55, p. 241.

⁴⁰⁷ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 175 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 366, September 1896, p. 282.

⁴⁰⁸ Moloney, *With Stairs to Katanga*, p. ix and p. xi and *Echoes of Service*, no. 253, January 1892, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁹ Moloney, *With Stairs to Katanga*, p. x and pp. 20-21.

expeditions. In December 1891, an argument between Msiri and Omer Bodson left both dead and the kingdom of *Garenganze* without its founding ruler.⁴¹⁰

The C.F.S. soon stepped into the ensuing anarchy, building a fort at Lofoi, to the north-east of Bunkeya, annexing Katanga and beginning to subdue the region and its people. Stairs' men reportedly looted many villages and killed hundreds of locals, establishing a reputation for violence in the region that saw whole villages abandoned before C.F.S. soldiers arrived and also an increase in raiding and violence that the Belgians could barely contain.⁴¹¹ Legat's forces were realistically unable to keep the peace across the entire region and Crawford declared that "warlordism" was on the rise in Katanga. It was also bemoaned that, despite their obvious failures, the C.F.S. was all that was stopping "utter lawlessness".⁴¹² They were already acting particularly viciously towards anyone accused of slaving, killing all those they found.⁴¹³

However, September 1893 saw a whole new level of violence perpetrated by the C.F.S. as the infamous Clément Brasseur arrived in Katanga to aid Verdick and replace Legat. *En route* to his post, Brasseur had already scattered a slave caravan and was set to only continue his violent military operations.⁴¹⁴ Brasseur was renowned for his merciless approach to foreign ivory and slave traders and was known for pronouncing very harsh sentences upon any he captured, either death or hard labour. It was not long before he had the whole of Katanga effectively under his boot heel.⁴¹⁵

The Plymouth Brethren missionaries, who had long been established in *Garenganze* and then in the Lofoi valley further east, were disgusted by Brasseur's new regime and Crawford, who witnessed many of the atrocities carried out by the C.F.S. from

⁴¹⁰ Moloney, *With Stairs to Katanga*, p. x and 135, *Echoes of Service*, no. 265, July 1892, p. 161 and no. 273, November 1892, pp. 260-261.

⁴¹¹ *Echoes of Service*, no. 273, November 1892, p. 255, no. 274, November 1892, p. 268, no. 357, May 1896, p. 139.

⁴¹² *Echoes of Service*, no. 281, November 1893, p. 56, no. 289, July 1893, p. 156, no. 301, January 1894, p. 11

⁴¹³ *Echoes of Service*, no. 273, November 1892, p. 259.

⁴¹⁴ *Echoes of Service*, no. 304, April 1894, p. 101 and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 36.

⁴¹⁵ *Echoes of Service*, no. 319, October 1894, p. 235, no. 364, August 1896, p. 250.

the Lofoi mission, described the situation as worse than he ever saw under Msiri, with villages desperate for protection only further despoiled by Belgian forces.⁴¹⁶

One of the most telling encounters between the mission and the C.F.S. under Brasseur came in 1895, when a caravan led by Campbell carrying supplies to the Lofoi mission station was seized by Brasseur's men. The Belgians accused the African porters in the caravan of slaving, confiscated the goods they carried and proceeded to sentence all 72 men to hard labour and marched them through the mission *en route* to Lake Tanganyika. This was the final straw for the Plymouth Brethren and they swiftly abandoned the Lofoi valley for their new station at Luanza, on Lake Mweru's western shore, stating "the impossibility of getting on with the officer in charge" as the reason.⁴¹⁷

Whilst this description of C.F.S. activities in Katanga during the early 1890s may seem to have little to do with their relationship with the Arab-Swahili of the Mweru-Tanganyika, it is important to understand the strategy used by the Belgians to combat slavery and also to understand the situation in Katanga and with Msiri and his Yeke, who were inextricably linked to the coastal trader, Nshimba of Kilwa Island, throughout this period.

Nshimba was originally from Uganda, but was seized as a slave and taken to Zanzibar where he was Islamised and introduced to the Swahili culture. His early life was spent as a *ruga-ruga* leading caravans for his owner back on Zanzibar. He soon struck out on his own, forming his own armed group and raided and traded, becoming notorious throughout the entire Mweru-Tanganyika region in the late 1880s.⁴¹⁸ Nshimba was soon asked to intervene in a war between the African chief of Kilwa Island in Lake Mweru, Nkuba, and Msiri's Yeke around 1887. When Nkuba could not pay Nshimba for his mercenary services, as promised, the trader occupied Kilwa Island, expelled Nkuba and set himself up as chief.⁴¹⁹ Nshimba also held territorial possessions on the shoreline of Lake Mweru at Kawesa, which was famed for its plentiful ivory and was desired greatly by the Europeans, especially the C.F.S.

⁴¹⁶ *Echoes of Service*, no. 357, May 1896, p. 135, no 363, August 1896, p. 230.

⁴¹⁷ *Echoes of Service*, no. 337, July 1895, p. 172, no. 339, August 1895, p. 198, no 340, August 1895, p. 205.

⁴¹⁸ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 1 and p. 7.

⁴¹⁹ Peters, D.U., 'A Visit to Kilwa Island and the African Oil Palm', *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Lusaka, 1953), p. 13, Lary and Wright, 'Swahili Settlements', p. 559 and Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah*, p. 233

According to Musambachime, this territory was known by peoples of the region as Nshimba's *inchi ya mali* or "land of wealth."⁴²⁰

The early 1890s, following Msiri's death, was the height of Nshimba's strength.⁴²¹ He regularly raided the western shore of Lake Mweru with his lieutenant, Senami, and allied with two other traders, Kafindo and Muruturutu, in preparation for any attack by Stairs and the C.F.S. Muruturutu was particularly effective in this process of raiding and demanding tribute from local chiefs and reportedly had over 15 tributaries by 1893.⁴²² Nshimba's raids were so devastating that they even threatened the C.F.S. fort in the Lofoi valley, despite Legat's garrison, and Nshimba took to calling himself Dimbi-Dimbi, meaning *Deceiver*, due to these brazen raids.⁴²³

However, with the arrival of Brasseur in 1893, the C.F.S. no longer remained on the back foot, waiting for Nshimba, and locked down the Lofoi valley under strict martial law.⁴²⁴ Verdick was then sent to lead the first assault on Nshimba's fortress-island of Kilwa, which failed to achieve much more than killing a few of Nshimba's *ruga-ruga* and seizing some of his powder and cloth before it was repulsed.⁴²⁵ This sudden assault succeeded in surprising Nshimba, as it represented the first attempt by a European power to militarily dislodge a coastal trader in the whole of Mweru-Tanganyika.⁴²⁶

A second attack occurred in April of the following year, led personally by Brasseur, but it failed in much the same way as the first assault.⁴²⁷ In response, Senami attacked both an A.L.C. caravan near Lake Mweru and opened fire on the Plymouth Brethren missionary, Law, as he passed up the lake's western shoreline to the mission station at Luanza.⁴²⁸ A third assault on the island by C.F.S. forces, this time led by Verdick, Descamps and Duvivier, ended once again in failure with many

⁴²⁰ Blair Watson, 'Occupation of Kilwa', p. 71 and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 34.

⁴²¹ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 35.

⁴²² Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 169 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 281, March 1893, p. 57.

⁴²³ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 170, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 36 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 296, October 1893, p. 239, no. 313, July 1894, p. 163, no. 318, September 1894, p. 224.

⁴²⁴ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 171 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 335, June 1895, p. 142.

⁴²⁵ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 171, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 33 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 314, July 1894, p. 172.

⁴²⁶ *Echoes of Service*, no. 308, April 1894, p. 102.

⁴²⁷ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 172 and Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 37.

⁴²⁸ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 172, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 37 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 327, February 1895, p. 36.

casualties, despite the Belgians possessing a *Nordenfeldt* organ gun, which fell into the hands of Nshimba's men.⁴²⁹ In an even worse stroke of luck, not long after the third attack was repulsed, Duvivier was killed by a hippo whilst boating on Lake Mweru, losing the C.F.S. a most talented and experienced officer.⁴³⁰

After fighting off three C.F.S. assaults on his fortress, Nshimba seemed all but invincible to both Europeans and Africans in the region.⁴³¹ Verdick wanted Crawford to step in and negotiate a deal between Nshimba and the Belgians. This was partially successful, with Muruturutu and Kafindo abandoning their alliance with Nshimba and choosing peace instead, largely based upon the suggestion of Crawford, who was one of the few Europeans of some reputation and with good standing amongst the coastal traders.⁴³² With his allies gone, Nshimba seemed somewhat weakened and Descamps launched a retaliatory attack on Senami for his earlier raids on the A.L.C. and Plymouth Brethren missionaries. Once again, this C.F.S. attack failed thanks to the Belgian rifles and *Nordenfeldt* organ gun captured previously by Nshimba's men.⁴³³

However, in 1895 Nshimba accidentally shot and killed himself, completing the task the C.F.S. had failed to achieve for over two years and this led to the effective crumbling of Arab-Swahili power around Lake Mweru.⁴³⁴ A force British force of Blair Watson, Croad and 21 Sikh policemen quickly swept onto Kilwa Island, soon after Nshimba's death and claimed it for the British, installing the trader's six-year-old son, Wasswa, as chief, with Nshimba's old lieutenants, Sudi, Senami and Kifula Mulyapembe assisting him.⁴³⁵

This meant that all of the major coastal traders around the lake were either dead or had fled elsewhere to escape the wrath of resurgent C.F.S. forces. Muruturutu had fled to the B.C.A.P. and set himself up as a village chief there, while Kafindo was presumed dead after being shot by the C.F.S. officer, Demol. However, it soon

⁴²⁹ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 172, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 37 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 332, April 1895, p. 101.

⁴³⁰ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 172, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 37 and Glave, 'Heart of Africa', p. 933.

⁴³¹ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 173.

⁴³² *Echoes of Service*, no. 328, February 1895, p. 52, no. 332, April 1895, p. 101.

⁴³³ Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, p. 37 and *Echoes of Service*, no. 363, August 1896, p. 231.

⁴³⁴ *Echoes of Service*, no. 345, November 1895, p. 266.

⁴³⁵ Macola, *Kingdom of Kazembe*, p. 29 and p. 179, Musambachime, *Nshimba of Kilwa Island*, pp. 38-39, Blair Watson, 'Occupation of Kilwa', pp. 70-71 and Peters, 'A Visit to Kilwa', p. 14.

turned out that Kafindo had only been wounded by the bullet and had also fled the area.⁴³⁶ With the region more peaceful than it had been in a decade with all of Nshimba's old Arab-Swahili and *ruga-ruga* followers under European control, C.F.S. involvement with the Arab-Swahili in Mweru-Tanganyika was effectively at an end.⁴³⁷

This section has explored the relationship between the Arab-Swahili in and around the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor and the European colonial powers penetrating the interior of East-Central Africa. There is an obvious contrast between the tactics used by the British and those used by the C.F.S., with the British relying upon economic sanctions to stifle Arab-Swahili power in the region, whilst the C.F.S. sought to use full-blown military operations to oust the coastal traders from their sphere of influence. Generally speaking, the British method was more successful and less bloody and led to a smoother transition of power for the lands under their control than those under the C.F.S., whose extremely violent methods actually caused even greater unrest than had often been seen before their arrival in Katanga and Mweru-Tanganyika.

By 1900, the Arab-Swahili were largely gone from Mweru-Tanganyika and their long dominance of the region was well and truly broken. The era of European control had begun and the only coastal traders remaining in the twentieth century were those able to negotiate places for themselves in the new colonial dispensations, such as Abdullah ibn Suliman and Muruturutu. The most famous traders, such as Tippu Tip and Rumaliza, had retired to Zanzibar and the Swahili coast and slavery was gradually being eliminated in East-Central Africa as the European colonial powers established effective governance over their lands.

⁴³⁶ *Echoes of Service*, no. 366, September 1896, p. 282, no. 369, November 1896, p. 329.

⁴³⁷ *Echoes of Service*, no. 369, November 1896, p. 329.



CAPTAIN DESCAMPS.

LIEUTENANT DUVIVIER.

Figure 2 – A photograph of the C.F.S. officers, Captain Descamps and Lieutenant Duvivier during the siege of Masala and Nsemiwe's camp in 1894. [Glave, E.J., 'Glave in the Heart of Africa: Peace and War between Lakes Bangweolo and Tanganyika (From the Journals of the Late E.J. Glave)', *The Century Magazine* (New York, August/September 1894), p. 931]



Map 3 – Sketch-map of the British colonial stations in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor drawn by Harry Johnston, High Commissioner of the B.C.A.P. [“Johnston to the Foreign Office”, 25th September 1893, National Archives of the United Kingdom Kew, FO2/55, p. 67]

Conclusion

A History of the Arab-Swahili in Mweru-Tanganyika - “A wide-ranging, rough-and-tumble business”?⁴³⁸

The nineteenth-century in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor was a time of great economic, social and political change, with the vast majority of these changes being driven by the involvement of Arab-Swahili traders in the region. From the beginning of the 1800s, the Arab-Swahili were gradually penetrating ever deeper into the East-Central African interior from their bases on the continent's east coast, with the aim of gathering ivory, slaves and other commodities to export. The first half of the century was one of African domination. The coastal traders in the African interior were still too weak and too few in number to pose any realistic threat to regional authorities of the region. Trade was limited to certain specific routes and most of the African political elites were able to maintain their hold on monopolies of goods such as ivory, making them the only source from which the Arab-Swahili could obtain the commodities they desired.

This all changed around the middle of the century with the arrival of very large trading caravans in Mweru-Tanganyika for the first time. The 1860s also saw the arrival of the el-Murjebi clan of Zanzibari traders, led by the brothers Tippu Tip and Kumba Kumba. These traders personified a new generation of Arab-Swahili and a shift in their modus operandi, leaving behind the ideas of minimal involvement in internal African affairs beyond the needs of trading, and of only resorting to violence if no other option were available.

Tippu Tip pioneered the use of direct violence or the threat of it as a tool to achieve his economic aims and, as a result, caravans became heavily armed and larger in size, whilst traders were far more willing to involve themselves in the internal politics

⁴³⁸ Reefe, T.Q., *The Rainbow and The Kings: A History of the Luba Empire to 1891* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), p. 163.

of the African peoples they were trading with. The new found strength of the Arab-Swahili caravans allowed them to largely ignore the dictates of paramount chiefs and to trade wherever and with whomsoever they wished. This change in strategy broke the power of the African political elites who relied upon traditional networks of tribute and gift-giving and the loyalty of their vassals. For the first time, chiefs of relatively minor standing were able to trade directly with the Arab-Swahili and make themselves wealthy in the process. With the foreign goods they obtained from this trade, they no longer needed the gifts provided by their overlords and thus were able to establish powerbases of their own.

However, the African political elites that the Arab-Swahili were depriving of their vassals and weakening would often not lie down and let their people come to depend upon intrusive elements, such as the Arab-Swahili, rather than their old paramounts. It is for this reason that the Arab-Swahili came heavily armed and were able to hold their own, militarily, against the forces of African polities for the first time. This exact situation played out in Itabwa in 1867, when the Tabwa paramount, Nsama III Chipili Chipioka, and Tippu Tip clashed over which leader would economically, and therefore politically, control the region. The heavily armed coastal traders defeated the Tabwa and forced Nsama III to flee, occupying his capital and with it the wider chiefdom of Itabwa.

This was the first time an Arab-Swahili trader had directly involved himself in internal African politics beyond Lake Tanganyika and it very much set the tone for what was to follow for the proceeding thirty years. After Nsama's defeat and death, a power struggle broke out between his successors, and the Arab-Swahili took the opportunity to play kingmaker in the region, supporting whichever claimant was likely to prove most advantageous for them. This pattern of Arab-Swahili-backed chiefs became the norm in many of the polities and chiefdoms in Mweru-Tanganyika, which effectively consolidated the position of coastal traders as the real power in the land.

This domination continued until the 1890s and the arrival of European colonial powers in Mweru-Tanganyika. The Europeans were drawn by both the economic potential of the region and the aim of ending the highly destructive Arab-Swahili slave trade. Through a combination of military means and economic strangleholds, the Europeans were able to cut the Arab-Swahili's contact with their east coast

bases and markets and stifle the trade that had previously allowed them to dominate the region. With their main source of income cut off, the coastal traders either capitulated and folded into the colonial administrations or were defeated and thus removed from the region. In less than a century the Arab-Swahili had developed from a position of weak, unsupported individual traders in the African interior, dependent upon the good will of African political elites, to become the masters of Mweru-Tanganyika, dominating the land and people politically, economically and militarily.

Thomas Q. Reefer's understated comment regarding the role played by violence in this rise to prominence and subsequent fall from grace is largely true. The Arab-Swahili, the long-distance trade and their actions in Mweru-Tanganyika were a "rough-and-tumble business" made up of threats, slavery, economic exploitation and violence.⁴³⁹ However, it was a "business" and the main focus of the Arab-Swahili throughout the time they spent in the African interior was profit and the gathering of wealth.

Even Tippu Tip, who dedicated most of his life to economic and military operations across East-Central Africa, retired to the coast with his massive wealth and vast number of slaves once the situation in the interior became unfavourable. For him it was just business, and whilst business was good, there was no reason to stop trading and raiding. However, as soon as the Europeans arrived and applied ever-increasing economic pressure upon the coastal traders, the sensible and wealthy ones amongst them simply abandoned their mercantile operations and retired to enjoy their wealth.

This thesis has aimed to explore the history of the Arab-Swahili in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor of East-Central Africa. It has presented a rough chronology of the activities of the traders, from their first forays beyond the Swahili coast, to their eventual expulsion by the European colonialists. It has also examined the economics of the Arab-Swahili long-distance trade and the commodities that drew the coastal traders to the interior. The second chapter of this thesis described the effects of the trade upon the Africans themselves and how they responded to large, well-armed

⁴³⁹ Reefer, *The Rainbow and The Kings*, p. 163.

caravans of traders and raiders passing through their lands on a relatively regular basis.

The third chapter of this thesis surveyed the use of violence by the Arab-Swahili, a defining feature of their time in Mweru-Tanganyika. The responses to the intrusive traders, in the form of fortifications, were explored as well as the importance of firearms in the Arab-Swahili rise to dominance.

Finally, the last decades of the Arab-Swahili in Mweru-Tanganyika and their relationships with the newly arrived European colonial powers were examined. The two separate and opposing case studies: of Tippu Tip's lieutenant Abdullah ibn Suliman; and of the trader Nshimba of Kilwa Island, highlighted the differing responses of the traders to the European encroachment on the lands that they had come to dominate. These examples also reveal the reactions of the Europeans in dealing with those die-hard traders remaining in the African interior. Abdullah was able to negotiate the terms of his incorporation into the emerging administrative structure of the B.S.A.C., whereas Nshimba's story ended in a far bloodier way, as the trader accidentally killed himself following two years of intense pressure and repeated assaults upon his fortress-village by C.F.S. forces.

The most important conclusions of this study have been, whilst not ignored, largely underplayed by historians. The first significant contribution of this thesis has been to foreground the true importance of the shift in tactics by the Arab-Swahili traders around the middle of the nineteenth-century: from peaceful trading and a non-interventionist policy to mercantilism at rifle-point, using violence and direct involvement in the political affairs of the African peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor to achieve economic and political domination of the peoples and their lands.

Lary and Wright did unquestionably highlight this shift in their article-length study of the region. However, they failed fully to address the consequences that such a shift in policy had upon almost every facet of everyday life in Mweru-Tanganyika. Whilst it brought the Arab-Swahili into a position of dominance in the region it also had the effect of weakening the social hierarchies that supported the hegemony of indigenous political elites. Prior to the arrival of the Arab-Swahili, political power was based upon social relationships and the loyalty of vassal chiefs and the number of followers a chief had. To increase their power, these chiefs would monopolise

commodities, such as ivory, to trade in exchange for imported goods, such as cloth and beads. These trade goods would then be distributed to win the support of the people and increase the power of the paramount.

The Arab-Swahili brought about an important change in these vertical patterns of distribution, as they made it possible for chiefs of decidedly little true influence or strength to achieve positions of power that would have previously been impossible. By trading directly with these village chiefs and headmen, they removed the dependence of these groups upon their old paramount chiefs and therefore weakened those at the top of the social strata, whilst empowering the low-level chiefs. The main effect of this was to weaken African political structures in general, as traditional senior chiefs lost both commercial revenue and the support of their vassals. This then made it easier for the coastal traders to defeat the paramount chiefs if they decided to oppose their actions.

The second substantive conclusion of this thesis is that not only did the arrival of the Arab-Swahili cause great social and political upheaval, but it also brought about new patterns of behaviour amongst political elites. Following the change in tactics that led them to involve themselves in the internal politics of those they traded with, the Arab-Swahili began to play king-maker throughout the region and directly influence the succession process of many African kingdoms. In the cases of both the Tabwa and Lunda of *Kazembe*, the coastal traders were able to support their own favoured candidates and install them as paramount chiefs. Without their coastal allies, many of these kings and paramounts had very little true power and this led to the situation where almost every successive ruler of these polities was installed by the coastal traders and effectively became their puppet.

Just as the Arab-Swahili were able to support their favoured candidates for paramount and put them on the throne, they were also able to remove support from their original candidates or shift their support to others, if the paramounts in question appeared to no longer favour their interests. Therefore, much of the political history of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in the second half of the nineteenth-century consists of succession disputes between rival candidates for the paramountcy, with one candidate backed by the Arab-Swahili and installed, only for him to lose favour with his coastal backers and be replaced by a different candidate who now had the

support of the Arab-Swahili. This represented a shift from the relatively stable successions of old, where any pretenders to the throne would have lacked the necessary military strength to effectively oppose the paramount of the polity.

The final conclusion of this thesis is that the decisive factor in allowing the Arab-Swahili to penetrate, and subsequently dominate, the peoples of the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor was internal division and the absence of a strong, centralised opposition to their political insinuations into the various polities of the region. The Arab-Swahili were only able to have such an important effect on the political sphere due to the fact that they were able to exploit both inter- and infra-ethnic divisions. If the coastal traders had entered a politically united region it would have been far harder for them to carry out their process of king-making.

One of the best examples of this is the *Kisama* of the Tabwa, whereby anarchy reigned in Itabwa following the death of a paramount until the accession of a new king. This process allowed the Arab-Swahili to legitimately act in an exploitative way, installing their chosen successor whilst opposing other royal pretenders and, once installed, they were then thanked for assisting in ending the *Kisama* and received the favourable trading partnerships that they always desired. However, the Arab-Swahili quickly realised that this process was repeatable, as soon as the new paramount no longer served their interests and a new, more-favourable candidate appeared.

This thesis has sought to provide new insights into the domination of Mweru-Tanganyika by the Arab-Swahili and to encourage others to explore the events that took place therein and the factors that allowed them to occur. It is far too easy to attribute the Arab-Swahili success to their military superiority over the African peoples and their access to unparalleled amounts of trade goods, such as cloth and beads. Whilst important, these factors only tell part of the story and this thesis has endeavoured to show that the hegemony of coastal traders between Mweru and Tanganyika was also the result of less immediately apparent dynamics.

In conclusion, the history of the Arab-Swahili traders in the Mweru-Tanganyika Corridor in the nineteenth-century is correctly summarised by T.Q. Reeve's jovial definition of it as a "rough-and-tumble business". The Arab-Swahili actions in the region were defined by their use of violence and exploitation to achieve their economic and political ends and this continued with the arrival of European

colonialists in the region. The violence and exploitation continued throughout the nineteenth-century and arguably only ceased in some areas in the twentieth-century with the end of colonial rule in countries such as Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia.

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