Introduction

Lakes, Oceans, and Littorals in History

Mohammed bin Khalfan el-Barwani arrived on the shores of Lake Tanganyika sometime between the end of 1876 and early 1879. He was born in c.1855 in Lindi on the East African coast into a family with kinship ties to Oman. He was educated in Zanzibar, he was a member of the Qadiriyya Brotherhood, and he was soon to negotiate his entry into the most influential commercial network in nineteenth-century East Africa. This commercial network was funded by a Kachchhi firm, the most prominent representative of which in eastern Africa was a member of the Omani sultan of Zanzibar's court. As Mohammed's prominence grew on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, he earned the nickname Rumaliza, which translates as 'The Terminator' or 'The Finisher'.[1] His rise is synonymous with several well-known phenomena in nineteenth-century East African history, including increasing levels of militarism in politics; increasing influence of traders emanating from East Africa's coast and islands (coastal traders) over interior regions' affairs; and East Africa's Great Lakes region's integration with the world economy.[2] Yet, a deeper reflection on Rumaliza's commercial, religious, and kinship associations reveals a history with additional layers and contexts. Rumaliza's arrival on the shores of Lake Tanganyika at the end of the 1870s was part of a broader trend that began in the early part of the nineteenth century in which phenomena traditionally associated with littoral regions of the wider Indian Ocean World (IOW) entered East Africa's Great Lakes region for the first time.

[1] For a fuller version of Rumaliza's biography, see: B. G. Martin, 'Muslim politics and resistance to colonial rule: Shaykh Uways B. Muhammad Al-Barawi and the Qadiriya Brotherhood in East Africa', *The Journal of African History*, 10, 3 (1969), 471–86.

[2] Richard J. Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa: The patterns and meanings of state-level conflict in the nineteenth century* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), 112–13; Philip Gooding, 'History, politics, and culture in Central Tanzania', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2019), 7–9.

At the time of Rumaliza's arrival on Lake Tanganyika's shores, 'a great … immigration' in the opposite direction was taking place.[3] This was a migration of populations referred to as 'Manyema', a heterogeneous body of people from the present-day eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It began sometime during the 1860s but had historical precedent in migrations that traversed Lake Tanganyika in a west–east direction in the deeper past.[4] Some nineteenth-century immigrant Manyema arrived as traders, but most were forced to migrate either in captivity or because their villages and fields had been destroyed by predatory raiders and elephant hunters.[5] As they arrived in what is now mainland Tanzania, many were ostracised for being *shenzi* (Swahili: barbarians, savages; sing. *mshenzi*; pl. *washenzi*), and they were frequently accused of being cannibals.[6] Some made a living through waged porterage; others did so through bondage to prominent traders, including Rumaliza.[7] Both these paths had the potential to enhance their status and to acquire them kinship, knowledge of Islam, and access to credit networks that stretched across the western IOW. As traders such as Rumaliza brought phenomena native to littoral regions of the IOW to East Africa's Great Lakes region, Manyema and other inland populations entered structures associated with the wider IOW from the opposite direction.

[3] Zanzibar National Archives (hereafter ZNA) AA2-29 Hore to Kirk, 25 Feb. 1880.

[4] Beverly Bolser-Brown, 'Ujiji: The history of a lakeside town, c.1800–1914' (unpublished PhD diss., Boston University, 1973), 36–7; Michele Wagner, 'Trade and commercial attitudes in Burundi before the nineteenth century', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26, 1 (1993), 155; Shun'ya Hino, 'Neighbourhood groups in African urban society: Social relations and consciousness of Swahili people of Ujiji, a small town of Tanzania, East Africa', *Kyoto University African Studies*, 6 (1971), 2; Jan Vansina, 'Notes sur l'histoire du Burundi', *Aequatoria*, 24, 1 (1961), 4–5; Mgr. Lechaptois, *Aux rives du Tanganika: Étude ethnographique couronée par la Société de géographie de Paris* (Algiers: Missionaires d'Afrique, 1913), 29–30; Robert Schmitz and Cyrille van Overbergh, *Les Baholoholo* (Brussels: A. Dewit, 1912), 273.

[5] David Northrup, *Beyond the Bend in the River: African labor in eastern Zaire* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for African Studies, 1988), 27; Katharina Zöller, 'Crossing multiple borders: "The Manyema" in colonial East Central Africa', *History in Africa*, 46 (2019), 303; Sheryl McCurdy, 'Transforming associations: Fertility, therapy, and the Manyema diaspora in Urban Kigoma, Tanganyika, c.1850–1993' (unpublished PhD diss., Columbia University, 2000), 74–8.

[6] Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa*, 219; Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, rebellion, and popular consciousness on the Swahili coast, 1856–1888* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), 2; McCurdy, 'Transforming associations', 59–78.

[7] Stephen J. Rockel, *Carriers of Culture: Labor on the road in nineteenth-century East Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006), 18; Zöller, 'Crossing multiple borders', 306; Geert Castryck, 'Bordering the lake: Transcending spatial orders in Kigoma-Ujiji', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 52, 1 (2019), 119–20.

The IOW is defined here as a macro-region spanning eastern Africa, the Middle East and South, Southeast, and East Asia. The idea of the regions around the Indian Ocean comprising a distinct 'world' has grown in popularity since the 1980s, most notably in more recent years through the works of Michael Pearson and Gwyn Campbell. This work, inspired by that of Fernand Braudel on the 'Mediterranean world', argues that the regions around the IOW were bound by a 'deep structure', which has underpinned historical contexts, continuities, and changes over the *longue durée*.[8] For these IOW scholars, this 'deep structure' is the Indian Ocean monsoon system, which is the basis for agriculture and, until the coming of steam in the mid-nineteenth century, travel around the IOW. Thus, the productive bases and the physical lines of trade around the ocean were indelibly shaped by the monsoon system. Moreover, trade begat exchanges of cultures over time, and thus historians have also discussed cultural connections that pervade the IOW, such as through histories of Islam, urban cosmopolitanism, and patterns of bondage.[9] Lake Tanganyika lies towards the western edge of this system. The agricultural base in the regions around it is dependent on monsoon rains, and seasonal changes in the direction of wind affect sail-powered travel across it. The nineteenth century represents the first time that the physical lines of connection expressed in trade and culture reached there directly, too. This book is about how these physical lines of connection developed and the roles that littoral and inland populations around Lake Tanganyika had in shaping them.

The Ivory Trade in IOW and Global Contexts

The core historical development leading to the encounter between traders such as Rumaliza and populations such as the Manyema was the expansion of the global ivory trade. The ivory trade emanating from

[8] See, for example: Michael N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), 13–27; Gwyn Campbell, *Africa and the Indian Ocean World from Early Times to circa 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1–21; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. I, trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For summaries and critiques of this perspective, see: Sujit Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', in *Oceanic Histories*, eds. David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 46–54; Geert Castryck, 'Indian Ocean Worlds', in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. Matthias Middel (New York: Routledge, 2019), 102–9.

[9] Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 40–68; Prita Meier, *Swahili Port Cities: The architecture of elsewhere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 1–25; Gwyn Campbell, ed. *Bondage and the Environment in the Indian Ocean World* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

East Africa is an ancient one. The earliest known text that refers to equatorial regions, dated sometime around the middle of the first century CE, identified the region as an ivory exporter.[10] Even so, East Africa was probably peripheral to the oceanic ivory trading during these times, as carvers in South Asia, in the Middle East, and around the Mediterranean preferred the harder ivory of Asian elephants.[11] Demand for the softer East African ivory fluctuated thereafter, but consistent demand outside East Africa probably developed from the sixteenth century onwards, when bangles made out of the cross-section of an elephant's tusk became fashionable in marriage ceremonies among South Asian women.[12] The tusks of African elephants were preferred to those of Asian elephants for this purpose as, being generally larger, their cross sections could more reliably be carved into adequate bangles. By the nineteenth century, South Asians were carving East African ivory into a range of everyday objects, including toys, models, chess and draughts pieces, puppets, and boxes.[13] The economies of whole towns in present-day north-western India, most notably Surat, were built on the working of East African ivory.[14] Consequently, during the nineteenth century, Gujaratis and Kachchhis, mediated through business connections in Oman, Zanzibar, and mainland coastal East Africa, became the principal financiers of ivory caravans heading into East Africa's deep interior (see Figure I.1).

Nineteenth-century South Asians, though, were not merely responding to demand for East African ivory in India. Indeed, they were principally supplying demand in industrialising Europe and North America. The first American patent for an industrial ivory-working machine was signed in 1799. Several more followed – for the manufacture of piano keys, billiard balls, combs, and cutlery and cane handles, among other

[10] Lionel Casson, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with introduction, translation, and commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 61.
[11] Campbell, *Africa and the Indian Ocean World*, 62.
[12] Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African commercial empire into the world economy, 1770–1873* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 1987), 78; Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade: South Asian merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 170–1. For more on the links between India and East Africa in the 'early modern' period, see: Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Between eastern Africa and western India, 1500–1650: Slavery, commerce, and elite formation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 61, 4 (2019), 805–34.
[13] R. W. Beachey, 'The East African ivory trade in the nineteenth century', *The Journal of African History*, 8, 2 (1967), 288; Martha Chaiklin, 'Ivory in world history: Early modern trade in context', *History Compass*, 8, 6 (2010), 530–42.
[14] Martha Chaiklin, 'Surat and Bombay: Ivory and commercial networks in western India', in *The Dutch and English East India Companies: Diplomacy, trade and violence in early modern Asia*, eds. Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 101–24.

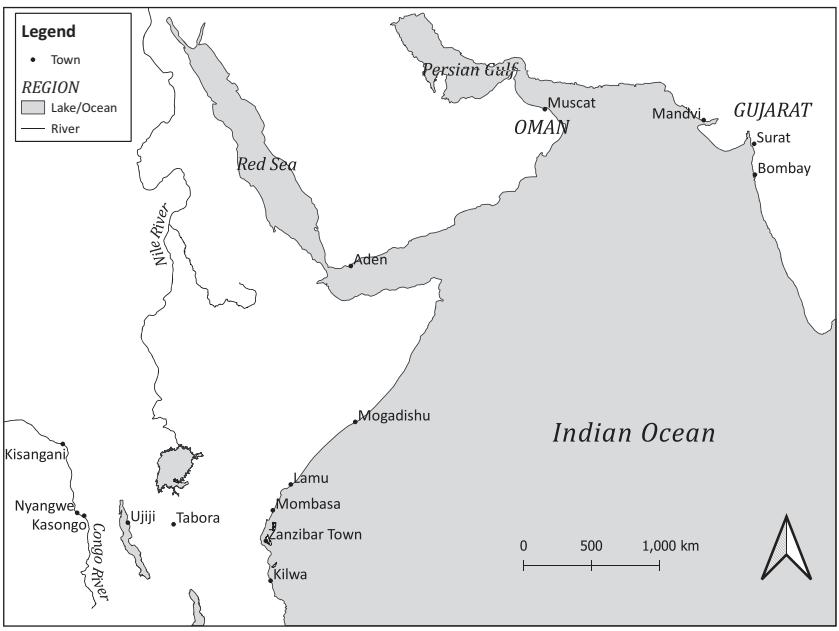

Figure I.1 Map of the major ivory trading centres in the western Indian Ocean World. Drawn by the author.

products. Just as in north-western India, whole towns emerged that were dependent on ivory working, most notably Ivoryton, Connecticut and others in New England.[15] Again, the softer, larger East African ivory was demanded more than South Asian ivory in this context. It was less liable to splitting during the industrial process, and larger tusks were especially needed for the manufacture of billiard balls, which were cut from the tusks' core. Growing demand in the industrialising West inflated the price of East African ivory on the world market. Its value in Zanzibar increased by a factor of around 4.5 between 1820 and 1870.[16] Representatives of American firms attempted to take control of the trade from Zanzibar, but Gujarati and Kachchhi businessmen and their Omani

[15] John Frederick Walker, *Ivory's Ghosts: The white gold of history and the fate of elephants* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2009), 85–6; Alexandra Celia Kelly, *Consuming Ivory: Mercantile legacies of East Africa and New England* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021), 58–66.
[16] Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 88.

political allies largely thwarted them.[17] The British, meanwhile, found it more efficient for most of the nineteenth century to buy the majority of their East African ivory from colonial centres in India, especially Bombay (Mumbai).[18] They sought to harness and shape IOW networks rather than replace them. Thus, the growing global capitalist economy of the nineteenth century entered the interior of East Africa through the mediation of IOW networks and not directly from the North Atlantic.

The growing value of the ivory trade enabled South Asian firms to fund ever more ambitious commercial expeditions into the East African interior. They were aided in this context by the Omani sultan, who moved his capital to Zanzibar in the early 1830s (Zanzibar and Oman had distinct sultanates from 1856 onwards). Subsequently, Omani and other coastal East African traders expanded pre-existing caravan routes heading from the coast into the interior. A 'northern route' departing Mombasa and Pangani in the direction of Kilimanjaro and thence to the Serengeti was an important ivory route throughout the nineteenth century, though it was largely the reserve of small-scale trading parties.[19] Additionally, a southern route departed the coast from Kilwa and surrounding towns and headed in the direction of Lake Malawi. Kilwa's long history of maritime connections with the wider IOW may have contributed to the prominence of this route in the early nineteenth century. However, the proportion of ivory being shipped to Zanzibar from Kilwa decreased markedly as the century wore on, and its key export from the deep interior later became people for enslavement.[20] Instead, the 'core' commercial routes that exported ivory came to be those that departed the coast at Saadani, Mbwamaji, and especially Bagamoyo.[21] Having departed from these towns, Omani and other coastal East African traders established themselves in towns across mainland East Africa, including around Lake Tanganyika. The most prominent towns in the wider region were Tabora (where coastal traders settled in c.1850), Rubaga (Buganda, in present-day Kampala; c.1855), Ujiji (c.1860), Nyangwe (c.1865), Kasongo (c.1865), and Kisangani (known to Europeans at the time as

[17] Chhaya Goswami, *The Call of the Sea: Kachchhi traders in Muscat and Zanzibar, c.1800–1880* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2011).
[18] Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 85–6; Thomas Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean arena, 1860–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 166–8.
[19] Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 174; Jonathan Walz, 'Route to a regional past: An archaeology of the lower Pangani (Ruvu) Basin, Tanzania, 500–1900 C.E.' (unpublished PhD diss., University of Florida, 2010), 48–50.
[20] Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 158–64.
[21] Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 174–83. Mbwamaji is often forgotten in this context. See: Stephen J. Rockel, 'Forgotten caravan towns in 19th century Tanzania: Mbwamaji and Mpwapwa', *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa*, 41, 1 (2006), 1–25.

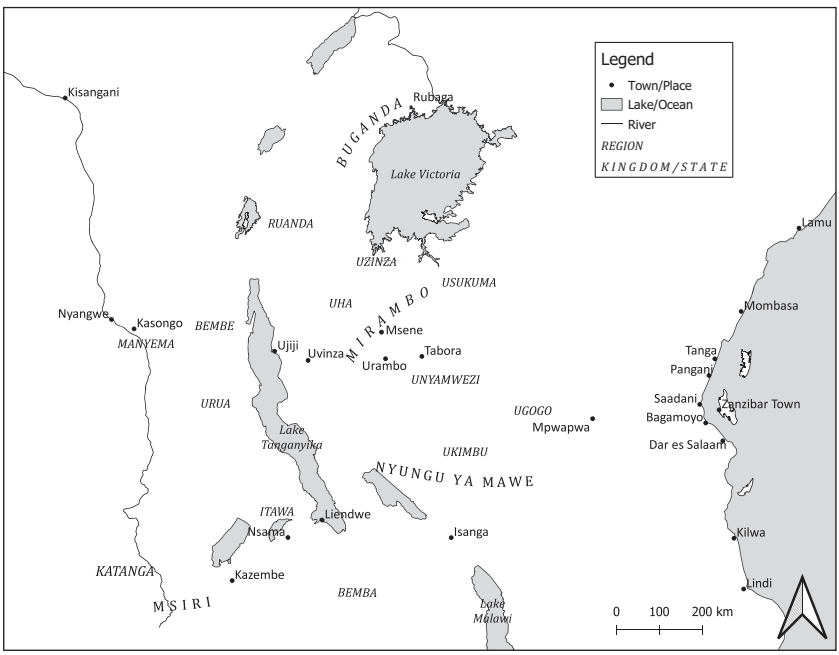

Figure I.2 Map of the major East African commercial centres and regions in the nineteenth century. Drawn by the author.

Stanley Falls; c.1885) – the last of these being on the northern bend of the Congo River, over 2,000 kilometres from the East African coast (see Figure I.2).

The expansion of the global ivory trade brought many inland East Africans into direct and sustained contact with trans-IOW commercial networks and the broader world economy for the first time. Many among them became crucial to how the ivory trade functioned. For much of the nineteenth century, traders who came to be known as 'Nyamwezi', from present-day west-central Tanzania, were the principal traders bringing ivory to the East African coast and islands.[22] They and other inland East Africans were also the principal porters, elephant hunters, and suppliers

[22] Andrew Roberts, 'Nyamwezi trade', in *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on trade in central and eastern Africa before 1900*, eds. Richard Gray and David Birmingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 49–50; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory*, 175; Rockel, *Carriers of Culture*, 35; Ralph A. Austen, 'Patterns of development in nineteenth-century East Africa', in *African Historical Studies*, 4, 3 (1971), 647; Karin Pallaver, 'New modes of production, urbanization and the development of Islam in nineteenth-century

of provisions to passing caravans throughout the century. Additionally, the ivory trade acted as a stimulant for a 'revolution' in political and military affairs.[23] New states emerged under the leadership of Mirambo and Nyungu ya Mawe, both of whom sought to militarily control and direct the ivory trade in parts of present-day western Tanzania.[24] Meanwhile, older states, such as Buganda, reformed themselves and became increasingly interested in long-distance trade.[25] In short, the ivory trade became a key feature of political and economic life in East Africa and connected inland East Africans to broader structures that traversed the western IOW, which themselves were becoming increasingly integrated with the growing global capitalist economy.

This represents the context for this history of Lake Tanganyika in c.1830–90. This book is an investigation of how people from the Indian Ocean littoral and East Africa's deep interior encountered each other within Lake Tanganyika's distinctive lacustrine environment. It seeks to explore the answers to several questions: how did Rumaliza and his contemporaries, with their Islamic beliefs, their urban cultures, and their kinship and commercial connections across maritime regions of the western IOW, perceive the people they encountered in the East African interior? At the same time, how did inland East Africans from around the Great Lakes region, such as the Manyema, who were primarily rural and had local belief systems and networks, perceive the new arrivals from the Indian Ocean littoral? Moreover, how did the encounters between these ostensibly distinct peoples affect their respective belief systems, commercial networks, material cultures, and institutions? The Lake Tanganyika case study and the IOW context add additional layers to these questions: how did the lacustrine environment affect encounters between diverse populations in East Africa's interior? And how did nineteenth-century encounters in East Africa's deep interior affect structures whose origins lay in littoral regions of the IOW? What emerges from these discussions is

Tanzania', in *Themes in Modern African History and Culture*, eds. Lars Berge and Irma Taddia (Padova: Libreria Universitaria, 2013), 34, 36.

[23] Richard J. Reid, *Warfare in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ch. 5; Andrew Roberts, 'Political change in the nineteenth century', in *A History of Tanzania*, eds. I. N. Kimambo and A. J. Temu (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969); Steven Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom: A history* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 171.

[24] Norman R. Bennett, *Mirambo of Tanzania 1840?–1884* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Aylward Shorter, 'Nyungu-ya-Mawe and the "Empire of the Ruga-Rugas"', *The Journal of African History*, 9, 2 (1968), 235–59; Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African soldiers, conquest, and everyday colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014), 73–82.

[25] Richard J. Reid, 'The Ganda on Lake Victoria: A nineteenth-century East African imperialism', *The Journal of African History*, 39, 3 (1998), 349–63.

a history of cultural exchange and interaction, processes which were particularly robust within Lake Tanganyika's distinct environmental context. Cultural forms emanating from the wider IOW and East Africa's Great Lakes region took on new forms and influences as peoples from these regions encountered each other in large numbers for the first time. As will be seen, this had significant consequences for the history of the wider IOW.

Lake Tanganyika as 'Meeting Place'

Lake Tanganyika lies almost at the centre of the African continent, about 1,000 kilometres west of the Indian Ocean at its closest point. It is Africa's deepest and most voluminous lake, and it is second in the world in both categories only to Lake Baikal in Russia. Early nineteenth-century populations living on its western and eastern shores looking north and south viewed it as 'endless', in the manner of someone looking over an ocean.[26] However, despite its size and oceanic connotations, it has received little historical attention, at least compared to Lakes Victoria and Malawi, and especially compared to surrounding terrestrial zones.[27] In this sense, Lake Tanganyika has yet to be 'written into' history.[28] This belies its importance during the nineteenth century as a distinctive environmental and commercial zone that linked the furthest reaches of ivory trading networks.[29] Nineteenth-century Europeans, meanwhile, saw Lake Tanganyika as so important that they considered it a potential

[26] Allen F. Roberts, 'Heroic beasts and beastly heroes: Principals of cosmology and chiefship among the lakeside Batabwa of Zaire' (unpublished PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1981), 89.

[27] For histories related to Lakes Victoria and Malawi, see, for example: Richard J. Reid, *Political Power in Pre-colonial Buganda: Economy, society and warfare in the nineteenth century* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 227–48; Edward A. Alpers, 'Trade, state, and society among the Yao in the nineteenth century', *The Journal of African History*, 10, 3 (1969), 405–20.

[28] The idea of 'writing in' a geographical feature into a broader history is explored in: Debjani Bhattacharyya, *Empire and Ecology in the Bengal Delta: The making of Calcutta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3. Oceanic scholars may regard historical writing on the East African Great Lakes as 'terracentric'. See: Sujit Sivasundaram, Alison Bashford, and David Armitage, 'Introduction: Writing world oceanic histories', in *Oceanic Histories*, eds. Armitage, Bashford, and Sivasundaram, 4; Rila Mukherjee, 'Escape from terracentrism: Writing a water history', *Indian Historical Review*, 41 (2014), 87–101.

[29] Beverly Bolser-Brown, 'Muslim influence on trade and politics in the Lake Tanganyika region', *African Historical Studies*, 4, 3 (1971), 617–29; Brown, 'Ujiji'; Allen F. Roberts, *A Dance of Assassins: Performing early colonial hegemony in the Congo* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); McCurdy, 'Transforming associations'; Castryck, 'Bordering the lake', 109–32.

source of the Nile – a Victorian-era obsession. One such 'explorer', Richard Burton, who arrived at the lake in 1858, translated the word, 'Tanganyika', as 'meeting-place'.[30] While the accuracy of this translation is dubious, it encapsulates much about Lake Tanganyika's nineteenth-century history and its connections with the wider IOW.[31] The lacustrine environment, Lake Tanganyika's distinctive shape, and its position in relation to ivory networks attracted traders, caravan workers, refugees, and religious entrepreneurs to the lakeshore, where they encountered an established mix of farmers, fishermen, and other traders. Thus, the lakeshore was a 'meeting place' for a wide variety of actors.

The idea of Lake Tanganyika as a 'meeting place' builds on broader understandings of large lakes, seas, and oceans in history. A significant contribution in this context comes from Fernand Braudel, his peers in the 'second generation' of the *Annales* movement, and several scholars of Mediterranean history who have been inspired by their perspectives.[32] Braudel argued that people living in coastal regions experienced different 'rhythms' of life to those inhabiting terrestrial regions.[33] In J. R. McNeill's terms, the shoreline environment represents an 'ecological niche' that has provoked distinct forms of individual and cultural adaptation.[34] Thus, while the sea may divide terrestrial zones, its shoreline links its peoples, expressed in shared cultures and in physical lines of connection made through commerce and kinship.[35] Nevertheless, such zones have also been noted for their diversity. They have rarely been governed by one ruler (Ancient Rome's hold over much of the Mediterranean is largely an aberration) and they have experienced a range of different influences from their hinterlands. Port towns have often been observed as the locations in which such influences meet. They have attracted people to facilitate others' crossings to opposite

[30] Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa: A picture of exploration* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 367.
[31] For more analysis of the meaning of 'Tanganyika', see: Roberts, 'Heroic beasts', 132.
[32] See, for example: Braudel, *The Mediterranean*; Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: the Annales school*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 36–72; J. R. McNeill, *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World: An environmental history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A study in Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[33] Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, I, 14.
[34] McNeill, *Mountains of the Mediterranean*, 3.
[35] Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*; Christopher Gratien, 'The mountains are ours: Ecology and settlement in late Ottoman and early republican Cilicia, 1856–1956' (unpublished PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2015), 5–6. For examples from the IOW, see: Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral society: The concept and the problems', *Journal of World History*, 17, 4 (2006), 353–73; Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral society: The case for the coast', *The Great Circle*, 8, 1 (1985), 1–8.