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*Un triangle. Les processus spatiaux d'urbanisation et le pouvoir politique à Tabora (Tanzanie) au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*

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# A triangle: Spatial processes of urbanization and political power in 19th-century Tabora, Tanzania

*Un triangle. Les processus spatiaux d'urbanisation et le pouvoir politique à Tabora (Tanzanie) au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*

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Au centre de cette riante et fertile vallée [...], se dressent les principaux villages de l'Ounyanyembé: Taborah, Kouihara, Kouikourou, qui forment un triangle équilatéral dont Taborah, l'antique Kazeh, est le sommet.<sup>1</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> In the novel *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, Jules Verne used Tabora as the setting for his “three Englishmen in a balloon” to make their slow descent in Central Africa.<sup>2</sup> European explorers’ descriptions of the town circulated so widely in 19th-century Europe that Tabora became a sort of archetype of the typical African market. Here, travellers and traders could rest and store their goods, obtain fresh water and enjoy a rich market offering a wide variety of food products. By 1860, all the caravans bound for the interior stopped at Tabora. The emergence of Tabora as an urban settlement was connected to the 19th-century development of the ivory and slave trades.<sup>3</sup> In the 19th century, a growing Western middle class in Europe and America began to express a growing demand for East African ivory as ivory-made luxury products such as carved figures, parts of musical instruments, combs, billiard balls and so on became one of the symbols of a high standard of living. The demand for ivory also came from consumers in India, where ivory-made jewellery was an important part of a girl’s dowry.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the demand also increased for slaves to work in the plantations of Zanzibar and the coast.<sup>5</sup> This request for ivory and slaves led to a dramatic intensification of

trade contacts between the interior regions and the coast and to the establishment of new trade routes.<sup>6</sup>

- 2 As a response to the demands of trade, new urban settlements emerged, first along the coast and later in the interior.<sup>7</sup> Together, these towns formed a network of “places where people met, mixed and traded goods and ideas” and became nodal points in a wider social and economic system.<sup>8</sup> They were characterized by a form of economic interdependence that involved exchanging the same types of commodities, comprising similar immigrant groups, and using shared commercial practices and currencies. As a consequence, they acquired a common cultural life expressed linguistically by the use of Kiswahili as a *lingua franca*, religiously by the introduction of Islam from the coast, and materially with the spread of similar material practices.<sup>9</sup> Larger towns such as Bagamoyo, Ujiji and Tabora, and smaller ones such as Mbwamaji and Mpwapwa became part of an “archipelago of towns”—to use Fernand Braudel’s definition—formed of centres that anchored trade routes and were connected to each other as well as to port cities on the coast and, ultimately, to the wider Indian Ocean world.<sup>10</sup>
- 3 In the region of Unyamwezi<sup>11</sup> in west-central Tanzania, the chiefdom of Unyanyembe became the main centre for commercial activity in the interior regions and it was here that the settlement of Tabora developed. As this article will discuss, the centrality of Tabora in 19th-century East African long-distance trade stemmed from a variety of reasons, one of the most important of which was the favourable attitude of the local political authority, the *mtemi*, towards trade and the presence of foreign merchants. The development of the ivory trade in Unyanyembe created new circumstances that necessitated rapid political change and brought about important shifts in the role of the *mtemi*. At the same time, it gave birth to a new agricultural and commercial class, the *vbandevba*, that acquired important political and social roles and contributed to the process of urban change.<sup>12</sup> The ability of various actors to navigate the framework of the economic structures of African urban life opened up new possibilities for the legitimization of political power.<sup>13</sup>
- 4 The descriptions of Tabora by European travellers and missionaries who visited the area in the second half of the 19th century were often contrasting. Father Barbot of the White Fathers, for example, described Tabora as “le Paris des indigènes qui voyagent dans ces contrées de l’Afrique équatoriale”,<sup>14</sup> whereas the British medical officer Joseph Moloney described it as “a collection of villages scattered over a considerable space”.<sup>15</sup> These descriptions were only apparently inconsistent, however. While the former was an impression produced by the cosmopolitan character of Tabora as the centre of 19th-century interior trade, the latter described the peculiarity of its urban form. As a matter of fact, Tabora was indeed a concentration of villages, as was common with other cities in the East African interior.<sup>16</sup> Tabora was composed of three main settlements—Tabora or Sokoni, the Kwikuru, and Kwihara—that together formed a “triangle”.<sup>17</sup> Each settlement was in turn made up of smaller villages comprising the houses of big traders and farmers surrounded by orchards, gardens and the dwellings of slaves and dependants. The three main settlements were connected to each other by large and well-maintained roads, and many people, especially trade agents and artisans as well as the informants of the *mtemi*, frequently moved from one settlement to the other.<sup>18</sup>
- 5 This article aims to contribute to the study of the urbanization of caravan-related towns in 19th-century Tanzania by unpacking the ways in which different settlements

came to form a town eventually known as Tabora. By following the development of the three main settlements that comprised it, this article will show that the urban structure of Tabora was shaped by its commercial role, by the presence of a political power that organized urban space to affirm its authority and display its wealth, and by the fact that it hosted a community of coastal traders with their own political representative, the *wali*.<sup>19</sup> This analysis points to the profound relationship between urban territoriality and the exercise of power. At the same time, urban space was shaped by the presence and activities of the thousands of porters, slaves, herders, traders, guards, diviners, etc. who moved to Tabora either temporarily or permanently, attracted by its market, its cosmopolitan life and the availability of labour.

- 6 The first section of the article compares the various sources that speak to the birth of Tabora as a caravan town and connects them to discourses of political and economic legitimacy. The specificities of the urbanization structure of Tabora are then identified, analysing the development of the three main settlements that made up the town. Section Two focuses on Kwikuru, the royal compound where the *mtemi* and *wali* resided, and analyses the role that political power played in shaping the urban form of Tabora. The third section analyses Kwihara, the residence of some of the most important coastal traders and discusses the characteristics of Tabora's Arab community. Finally, the fourth section focuses on Sokoni, the marketplace and commercial heart of the town.

## The birth of a caravan town

- 7 The Swahili and Arab sources on the origins of Tabora all explain the establishment of the town as the result of coastal initiative. The story of the town's founding was first reported by the British explorer Richard Francis Burton—the first European to visit Tabora, in November 1857—who calls the town “Kazeh”. Burton reports that, before the settlement existed, the coastal traders were established a day's march north of Tabora at Kigandu of P'huge. In 1852, however, after a conflict with a local ruler, the coastal traders moved to the south where the *mtemi* Fundikira offered them a place to settle close to the capital of his chiefdom, Itetemia.<sup>20</sup> Burton shares a story that Musa Mzuri (“Moses the handsome”) had told him. According to this version, Musa Mzuri—an Indian Muslim born into poverty in Surat—and another trader from the coast, Snay bin Amir, arrived in the area when it was “a desert”; they built houses, sank wells, and “converted it into a populous place”.<sup>21</sup> Musa told Burton that he had first visited the area with his brother Sayyan and explained that he later selected that location to build his first trade depot because of the convenient availability of ivory in the area as well as the hospitable reception he had received from the local *mtemi* and his people.<sup>22</sup> According to Musa, the foundation of Tabora stemmed from the initiative of coastal traders making the most of the peaceful conditions of the area and the collaborative attitude of the local authorities.
- 8 The oral sources collected by Father Henri Léonard among the coastal residents of Tabora also attribute the town's foundation to the arrival of coastal traders. According to these sources, however, the first coastal traders arrived in the region when Swetu was the *mtemi*—therefore, according to the genealogy of the Unyanyembe ruling family, before 1852 and the settlement of Musa Mzuri.<sup>23</sup> According to these sources, the Arabs

arrived, dug wells and planted grains and fruit trees. Other caravans followed later, including that of Musa Mzuri.<sup>24</sup>

- 9 Another account of the origin and development of Tabora comes from the Swahili travel narratives collected by the German linguist Carl Velten in the 1890s and published under the title *Safari za Wasuaheli*.<sup>25</sup> While serving as an interpreter for the colonial administration in German East Africa, he encouraged Muslim intellectuals to produce historiographical accounts that he then transcribed. One of these was Sleman bin Mwenyi Tshande bin Mwenyi Hamisi esh-Shirazi, a *mwungwana*,<sup>26</sup> whom Velten had met in 1893 in Dar es Salaam. According to Sleman, Tabora developed out of a village in the vicinity of which other villages were later established. Each village had its own name and the land was allocated to the coastal traders, of either Arab<sup>27</sup> or Indian origins, by the *mtemi*. According to Sleman bin Mwenyi, the first village was founded by Muhina bin Slemani Le'urubi and Said bin 'Othmani and was called "Tabora Kanyenye".<sup>28</sup> Sleman bin Mwenyi lists the names of a total of 13 villages which, according to his account, began to be gradually and collectively referred to as "Tabora". His list encompassed only the settlements of coastal traders and not Nyamwezi settlements, including Unyanyembe's capital of Itetemia. According to Nathalie Carré, Mwenyi's tale reconstructs the history of Tabora in a narrative that resembles those explaining the origins of the Swahili towns on the coast. She points out that the section about the origins of Tabora starts with "*auwali Tabora Kanyenye*", meaning "at the origin there was Tabora Kanyenye", which is the typical incipit of the Swahili chronicles of the coast.<sup>29</sup> Sleman bin Mwenyi's narrative is confirmed, at least in part, by the names of the quarters of Tabora recorded by the Germans in the 1890s. Some of the names of the villages mentioned by Sleman bin Mwenyi, such as Kanyenye, Lufita [Rufita], Tshemtshem [Chemchem] and Kwihara, do in fact correspond to the names of the quarters of Tabora.<sup>30</sup>
- 10 By establishing the role of coastal traders in founding the town, the aim of these sources was to historically foreground the commercial importance of the coastal community of Tabora. This was especially important considering that these stories were told to European visitors, actors who could become—or already were—commercial or political allies.
- 11 However, other sources confirm that the first coastal settlement was established in a place that already hosted an African settlement, the original village having developed around a source of water. According to Father Guillet of the White Fathers,
- Tabora is built without a precise order: it is more a series of villages, rather than a homogeneous city. It extends for more than two kilometres; once it was limited to the huts of the quarter called chem-chem, which is the name of the spring which is there. Then the Arabs established themselves here and have extended it to its actual borders.<sup>31</sup>
- 12 Some perspectives on the origins of Tabora derive from the various discussions about its name. As seen above, Burton mistakenly called Tabora "Kazeh". This name aroused the curiosity of the European travellers following him as, when they reached the town, they discovered it was called Tabora and not Kazeh. All of the information they collected to locate Burton's Kazeh makes reference to the origins of the settlement. According to Reverend Charles T. Wilson and Robert W. Felkin, two missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, Kazeh was the name of Musa Mzuri's residence and not of the entire settlement, even though Burton used the name Kazeh to refer to the settlement as a whole (see Fig. 1).<sup>32</sup> According to Adolphe Burdo, Kazeh was the name of

a spring in the town centre where all the caravans obtained water.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, John Hanning Speke, who visited Tabora in 1861, reported that Kazeh was the name of a well “in the village of Tabora”.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 1: The house of Musa Mzuri at Kazeh



Front View of Músa's Tembo at Kazé.

Note the source of water in front of the house and the typical *tembe* veranda.

Source: J.H. SPEKE, 1863, p. 100.

- 13 All of the explanations of the name Kazeh refer to places that lay in some way at the origins of Tabora's development: a source of water or the first commercial depot in the area.<sup>35</sup> Multiple layers of memory coexisted in Tabora at the time, and they were all connected to the symbolic meaning of the town's inception.<sup>36</sup> On the basis of a comparison of the available sources, it is therefore reasonable to affirm that the town of Tabora grew out of an already existing Nyamwezi village that began to expand starting from the 1840s, after coastal traders settled in the area.
- 14 With reference to the name “Tabora”, the sources provide two explanations. According to Father Léonard, the name “Tabora” meant “the warriors have arrived and penetrated into the country”, in Kiswahili *kutaboa*.<sup>37</sup> Stanley provides a more plausible explanation. According to him, the name derived from the Kinyamwezi word *matobolwa*, a dish made with sun-dried sweet potatoes that was commonly sold in the market of Tabora.<sup>38</sup> According to Unomah, after the establishment of a caravan stop close to Kazeh hill, small-scale traders, food sellers and ivory hawkers went there to sell their goods to the caravans. There was a Nyanyembe elder there by the name of Isekafugata who sold sliced, boiled potatoes, “tobolwa” or “makewe”, that became very famous with everyone who passed through Unyanyembe. For this reason, the caravan stop came to be known as “Tabolwa”, later changed to Tabora.<sup>39</sup> From the 1860s onward, Tabora began to be used as a collective name to refer to the various urban settlements that developed in different periods around the capital of Unyanyembe, Itetemia, and its royal compound, the Kwikuru.

15 The location where Tabora was established had certain characteristics that made it particularly convenient for traders. First, it was situated at the natural juncture of the interregional trade networks connecting Unyamwezi to the surrounding regions.<sup>40</sup> Before the development of the ivory and slave trade in the 19th century, the region of Unyamwezi was characterized by an articulated network of interregional and regional trade in which Nyamwezi traders played the role of intermediaries. During the dry season, Nyamwezi traders undertook long commercial expeditions to the neighbouring regions to exchange their products—mainly sorghum, sweet potatoes, bark goods and honey—for cattle, iron, salt and copper.<sup>41</sup> Trade was therefore well consolidated in the region, but there were neither regular markets nor large settlements.<sup>42</sup> With the development of long-distance trade with the coast, the existing network was extended to form the basis of long-distance trade routes and Unyamwezi remained central to this network. As the Belgian explorer Jérôme Becker noted,

[...] Tabora constitue le véritable noeud de communication d'où partent et où convergent, dans tous les sens, d'actives caravanes. C'est le seul point de jonction de la côte avec l'intérieur. On s'y rend pour s'approvisionner de l'Ou-Ganda, au Nord, d'Oudjiji et de Karéma à l'Ouest, au Sud de l'Ou-Rori et du Lac Nyassa (route uniquement suivie par les Arabes), et de l'Est de Zanzibar, via Bagamoyo.<sup>43</sup>

16 Unyamwezi was also a convenient place to establish a commercial centre thanks to the availability of porters. Indeed, most of the porters employed in long-distance trade were Nyamwezi.<sup>44</sup> According to Father Guillet of the White Fathers, it was impossible to find a more suitable place than Tabora for recruiting porters, because the inhabitants of other regions, such as Usagara and Ugogo, were not available to engage in this particular job.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it was far less expensive to hire Nyamwezi porters directly in their place of origin.<sup>46</sup> When Nyamwezi porters were hired on the coast, they generally refused to go beyond Unyamwezi. These individuals were actually both peasants and porters and on returning to Unyamwezi, especially during the rainy season, they went back to work in their fields. For this reason, traders who wanted to continue their commercial ventures as far as Lakes Tanganyika or Victoria were obliged to stop in Unyamwezi to hire new gangs of porters. Therefore, a stop in Unyamwezi was a requirement for organizing a new caravan. This was a complex and prolonged process that involved lengthy negotiations over porters' wages as well as purchasing goods and provisions to continue the journey. Hence, the need for safe places to store goods led coastal traders to establish trade depots such as Tabora.<sup>47</sup> Settlements in Unyamwezi became “the convenient meeting places for all those participating in the various traditions which together ma[d]e up the trade” and more and more people were drawn to these centres.<sup>48</sup>

17 As discussed in the introduction, many of the European travellers and missionaries who visited Tabora from the 1850s onwards considered it not a town but an agglomeration of villages. Richard Francis Burton, for example, reported that “Contrary to what might be expected this ‘Bunder-district’ contains villages and hamlets, but nothing that can properly be termed a town.”<sup>49</sup> Each settlement had its own name and hosted both Arab and Nyamwezi houses:

The Mtemi or Sultan Fundikira, the most powerful of the Wanyamwezi chiefs, inhabits a tembe, or square settlement, called ‘Ititenya’, on the western slope of the southern hills. A little colony of Arab merchants has four large houses at a neighbouring place, ‘Mawiti’. In the centre of the plain lies ‘Kazeh’, another scattered collection of six large hollow oblongs, with central courts, garden-plots,

store-rooms, and out-houses for slaves. Around these nuclei cluster native villages  
—masses of Wanyamwezi hovels, which bear the names of their founders.<sup>50</sup>

- 18 An analysis of the available documentary and visual sources suggests that these settlements were related to each other and that there was a logic behind this specific form of urbanism, a logic related to the role of local political authorities and the centrality of the marketplace in urban life.

## The Kwikuru and political power in Tabora

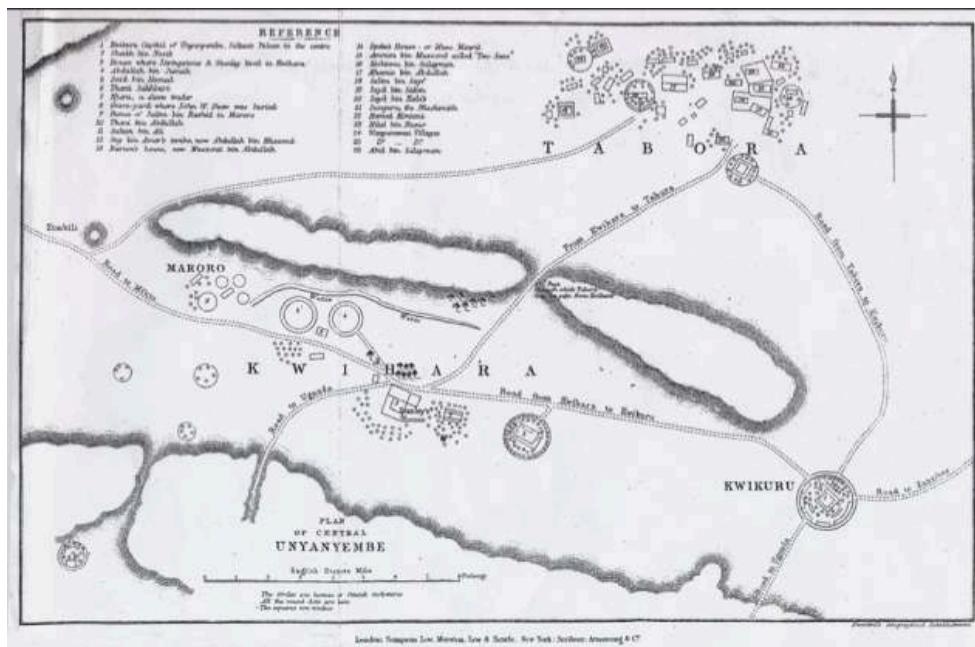
- 19 Tabora was largely shaped by the deep-seated relationship between urban territoriality and the way the chief of Unyanyembe, the *mtemi*, exercised power. He was vested with social and political authority and, in conjunction with a group of elders, the *wanyampara* (sing. *mnyampara*), made decisions regarding justice, war and peace. He levied taxes on grains and controlled the accumulation of food supplies. He also had an important ritual and spiritual role, being the link between the ancestors and his people. Before the development of long-distance trade, his role was to regulate a society based primarily on subsistence agriculture, craft production and interregional trade in which people accessed wealth through agriculture and hunting. He controlled the accumulation of the agricultural surplus set aside for redistribution in case of drought, famine, and war.<sup>51</sup> The Nyamwezi's participation in long-distance trade with the coast brought about significant changes in this system, however, as the *mtemi*'s political activities came to be granted more importance than his ritual role.<sup>52</sup>
- 20 This change is represented clearly by the early 1840s election of Isale, better known as Fundikira, to the position of *mtemi*. Before this election, the post of *mtemi* could be filled only by the *mtemi*'s sister sons. Fundikira was the direct son of *mtemi* Swetu, however, and was selected thanks to his experience in trade with the coast. Unlike most of the princes who lived in the districts as small-scale farmers or traders, Isale organized his father's commerce and had proved to be a skilled ivory trader. Unomah reports that Isale was said to have enjoyed "spectacular success both in the trading transactions as well as in his control of the palace residents who regularly accompanied him in his safaris [trips]".<sup>53</sup> This made him particularly respected among elders and foreign visitors to the capital, and when Swetu died the elders chose him as the new *mtemi*. Many of Unyanyembe's electors were traders, and selecting a chief with trade experience was a way to reinforce the economic and commercial centrality of Unyanyembe.<sup>54</sup> After the death of Fundikira in 1859, the *mtemi* continued to be selected from among those members of the royal family who had experience in trade. Mnywa Sele (*mtemi* in 1860) and Mkasiwa (*mtemi* from 1860 to 1876) were both traders, as was Isike, Mkasiwa's son, who served as *mtemi* from 1876 until he was defeated by the Germans in 1893.<sup>55</sup> As a consequence of the development of long-distance trade, matrilineal succession was therefore replaced by the election of those members of the *mtemi*'s family who had proven their ability in trade and had visited the coast.<sup>56</sup> From the 1840s onward, prosperity and political power in Unyanyembe were therefore largely based on the ivory trade. The *mtemi* were able to gain possession of ivory in different ways: through trading expeditions, as gifts from foreign merchants or subjects who sought favours or special protection from the *mtemi*, from the collection of tributes,<sup>57</sup> and by confiscating the property of those accused of witchcraft or treason.



Ivory collected through these channels allowed the *mtemi* to organize large ivory caravans to the coast.<sup>58</sup>

- 21 The *mtemi* resided in the Kwikuru, a large fortified compound located in the capital of Unyanyembe, Itetemia, that lay in the eastern part of Tabora.<sup>59</sup> At the Kwikuru the *mtemi* received his guests, discussed trade and politics with the Arabs, and administered law and justice.<sup>60</sup> It was in the Kwikuru that the *mtemi* judged judicial cases, including thefts and killings.<sup>61</sup> The caravan road from the coast passed through the Kwikuru, and it was the first place the caravans encountered when entering Tabora (see Fig. 2). If a caravan wanted to proceed to the market to obtain supplies and water (the market was approximately two hours away), it first had to stop at the Kwikuru. This arrangement allowed the *mtemi* to control trade and impose tolls on caravans. The Kwikuru's location along the main caravan road from the coast was a visual representation of the *mtemi*'s political power that testified to the perceptions and impressions of both the city's inhabitants and visitors. By controlling the caravan road to and from the coast and by negotiating with the traders in his compound, the *mtemi* was able to not only profit from long-distance trade, but also show his wealth and authority to his visitors and thereby enhance his prestige.<sup>62</sup> For this reason, the residence of the *mtemi* was larger than the other houses in the compound.

Figure 2: Plan of Unyanyembe



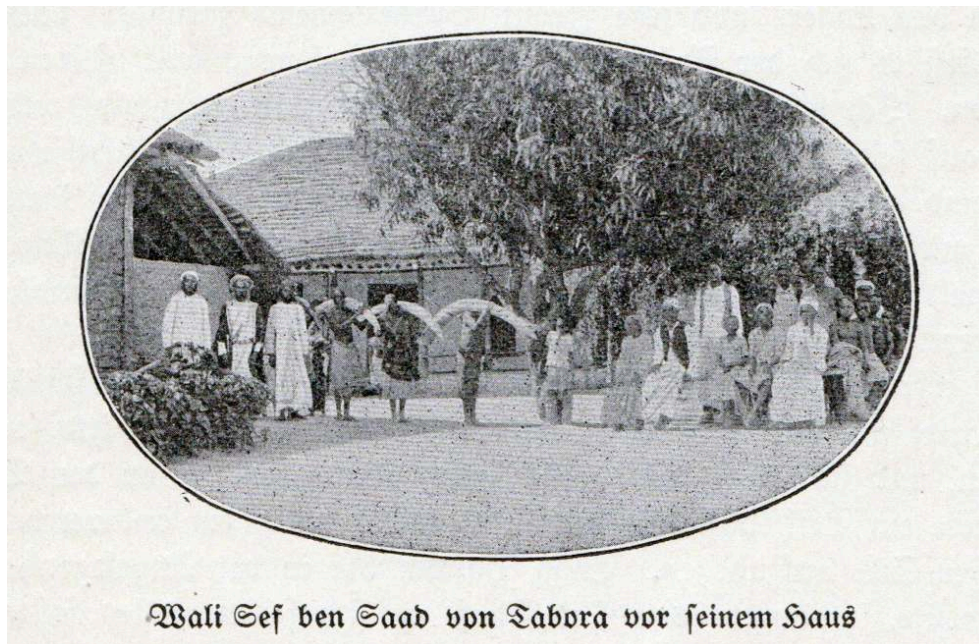
SOURCE: H.M. STANLEY, 1872.

- 22 The house of *mtemi* Isike, for example, was 15 metres high with a generous veranda and a large front courtyard and was located at the centre of the Kwikuru.<sup>63</sup> It was surrounded by the houses of important dignitaries and traders, both Nyamwezi and of coastal origins. Large war drums covered in zebra, cow or lion hides were placed in front of their houses.<sup>64</sup> The settlement was traversed by wide roads that were better kept and larger than those in the other parts of Tabora. According to the White Fathers, "L'ensemble est assez agréable".<sup>65</sup> In the 1870s–90s the population of the Kwikuru counted approximately 400–500 people, many of whom were slaves.<sup>66</sup>

- 23 When Becker visited it in the 1880s, the Kwikuru of Isike was fortified and surrounded by a wall decorated with human and animal skulls. The reason behind this fortification lay in the need to protect the residence of the *mtemi* against attacks from other chiefs seeking to challenge the political and commercial centrality of Unyanyembe. The most famous example of such a challenger was Mirambo, the chief of Urambo who built a large state by subjugating many Nyamwezi chiefdoms and taking control of portions of the caravan roads from Tabora to Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika. Between 1871 and 1875, Mirambo engaged in several confrontations with the Arabs of Tabora and their Nyanyembe allies.<sup>67</sup>
- 24 The representative of the Sultan of Zanzibar, the *wali*, also lived in the Kwikuru. The *wali* was the spokesperson for the Arab community of Tabora and, as such, took part in local war councils alongside the *mtemi* and his ministries.<sup>68</sup> When Burton visited Unyanyembe in 1857, the Arab community of Tabora had been without a leader since 1852 following the death of Abdullah bin Salim, a merchant with 200 armed slaves. In 1859, when Fundikira died, his successor Mnywa Sele imposed taxes on the coastal traders.<sup>69</sup> As a consequence, the Arabs of Tabora and the *vbandevba* acted to overthrow and exile him from Tabora, replacing him with his brother Mkasiwa.<sup>70</sup> The political instability that followed, with Mnywa Sele waging war and attacking caravans, led the Sultan of Zanzibar to appoint a *wali* in the early 1860s.<sup>71</sup> The appointee was Said bin Salim, a trader with strong commercial connections to the Indian traders of the coast.<sup>72</sup> The Sultan of Zanzibar had limited influence over Tabora's political life, and the Arab community or *mtemi* had the right to depose a *wali* and independently nominate a new one.<sup>73</sup> For instance, the *wali* was deposed by the *mtemi* in 1877 when Isike accused the *wali* Said bin Salim of having taken sides with Mirambo during the war with Tabora. He replaced Said bin Salim with Abdallah bin Nassib, also known as Kissesa.<sup>74</sup>
- 25 The house of the *wali* and the house of the *mtemi* in the Kwikuru was described by Burdo as an old building built of bricks and furnished in the coastal fashion. It was decorated with oval mirrors in golden frames, Persian tapestries and other objects from the coast. In front of the *wali*'s house stood a pole flying the red Zanzibari flag.<sup>75</sup> The fact that the *mtemi* and *wali* lived in the same place shows that, despite the political tensions of the 1860s briefly discussed above, their relationship was oriented towards political and economic cooperation. The Arab community's relationship with the *mtemi* was therefore generally characterized by "pacifist tendencies", as their main interest was maintaining the peaceful conditions conducive to trade.<sup>76</sup> As Thomas McDow points out, the ruling family of Unyanyembe and local Arab community came to rely on each other in commercial, political and social spheres.<sup>77</sup> *Mtemi* Fundikira, for example, created favourable commercial and political relationships with the Arabs by exempting them from the payment of taxes.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, his daughter Karunde married an important trader from Oman, Mohammed bin Juma, the father of the famous trader Tippu Tip. After this marriage, the coastal community of Tabora supported Fundikira in local political disputes.<sup>79</sup> When the *mtemi* interfered with the Arab traders' activities, however, these pacifist tendencies were quickly abandoned and at times Tabora was characterized by a "politically explosive atmosphere".<sup>80</sup> The *mtemi* could interfere with trade by imposing taxes, by setting limitations on the employment of porters, and by closing the caravan roads and market of Tabora. Isike, for example, blocked the caravan roads in 1884, 1887, 1889 and 1892.<sup>81</sup> These blocks could last for several months and while they were in force the *mtemi* forbid porters to enlist in the caravans.<sup>82</sup>

- 26 When the Germans defeated Isike and occupied Tabora in 1893, they set up a new *mtemi*, Fundikira's daughter Bibi Nyaso, and signed a peace treaty with her. With this treaty, Bibi Nyaso agreed to maintain favourable conditions for trade and to supply porters to the German government and traders.<sup>83</sup> Significantly, she was stripped of the instruments through which previous *mtemi* had been able to control long-distance trade. Therefore, although the figure of *mtemi* was maintained, Bibi Nyaso's authority came to depend largely on the Germans who had appointed her. These new political relations were also reflected in the organization of the urban space of Tabora. Bibi Nyaso continued to live in the Kwikuru, but the *wali* moved to the market where the Germans had established their governmental offices (see Fig. 3).<sup>84</sup> The Arab community needed the support and cooperation of the Germans if they wished to continue conducting trade. The *wali* in particular collaborated with the Germans in maintaining order in the market and was in charge of the postal service. For his services, he received a wage from the colonial government.<sup>85</sup>

Figure 3: The *tembe* of the *wali* Sef ben Saad



SOURCE: W. LANGHELD, 1909, p. 49.

- 27 This represented an important change in the relationship between political power and urban space in Tabora, a shift that reflected a new political order in the town. Access to imported goods and the presence of foreign traders affected local power structures and shaped urban space, with spatial relations used to strengthen their position and legitimacy.<sup>86</sup>

## Kwihara and coastal life in Unyanyembe

- 28 As discussed in the first section, the establishment of coastal traders in Tabora contributed to the commercial and political centrality of Unyanyembe. After an agreement for the protection of coastal caravans had been signed in 1839 between the Sultan of Zanzibar and some Nyamwezi chiefs, coastal traders settled in various parts of

Unyamwezi.<sup>87</sup> They took up residence in Kigandu, Msene, Kilila and Kwihara. Being located a few miles to the west of Itetemia, Kwihara became the most important settlement of coastal traders in Unyamwezi in the 1860s thanks on one hand to the favourable attitude of the *mtemi* and his people in relation to trade and foreign merchants, and on the other to its strategic position in the heart of Unyamwezi.<sup>88</sup>

29 Most of the coastal traders who lived in Kwihara—and later Tabora—were Arabs from Zanzibar, of Omanese origins. According to Burton, Swahili traders settled in Msene and they had a “natural aversion” to the Arabs of Tabora.<sup>89</sup> According to Thomas McDow, this animosity was due to the social tensions that had developed along the coast, tensions that led to the establishment of “bifurcated settlements” in the interior in which Arabs and Swahilis lived separately.<sup>90</sup>

30 The community of coastal residents was not a large one. Burton estimated that, in the late 1850s, the Arab population of Tabora amounted to no more than 25 people. In 1872, according to Livingstone, their number had increased to 80 people out of a total population of 5,000.<sup>91</sup> It was, however, a fluctuating population, as many Arabs travelled to trade and did not permanently reside in town.<sup>92</sup>

31 Descriptions of the Arabs and their luxurious lifestyle abound in the European sources. Burton, for example, reported that:

The Arabs live comfortably, and even splendidly, at Unyanyembe. The houses, though single-storied, are large, substantial, and capable of defence. Their gardens are extensive and well planted; they receive regular supplies of merchandise, comforts, and luxuries from the coast; they are surrounded by troops of concubines and slaves...<sup>93</sup>

32 Their lifestyle was fashioned around coastal urban life. They regularly imported goods from the coast that served to stress their origins and social status. As McDow points out, Indian Ocean actors used their mobility to recreate a coastal society in the interior, and this was particularly evident from the point of view of their lifestyle and material culture.<sup>94</sup> They received regular provisions of “tea, coffee, sugar, species, jellies, curries, wine, brandy, biscuits, sardines, salmon, and such fine cloths and articles they require for their own personal use”. Their houses were all furnished with “Persian carpets [...], luxurious bedding, complete tea and coffee services, and magnificently carved dishes of tinned coppers and brass levers”.<sup>95</sup>

33 Although many of them were reported to live “splendidly” in Unyanyembe, many others had huge debts with the Indian financiers of the coast who had advanced them commodity currencies such as cloth and beads in order to undertake commercial expeditions in the interior. For this reason, many of them lived and travelled in the interior but never returned to the coast. According to Father Hauttecoeur, the Arabs of Tabora were

all poor devils who try to make a fortune and who only have debts. The richest Arabs here in Tabora, with the exception of two or three, are up to their ears in debt and even if they could sell all of their goods here they would not be able to repay them. They exercise their trade on behalf of the Arabs and Indians of the coast who make them pay through the nose. An Arab told me once: You see here all the Arabs of Tabora and you think that at home they are rich as they are here: [...] here they have slaves, women, and everything they want, but in Muscat they will have nothing of this.<sup>96</sup>

34 Some of the Arabs of Tabora were specialized in tailoring, rope-making or working copper into ornaments, and their businesses were so successful that many of them,

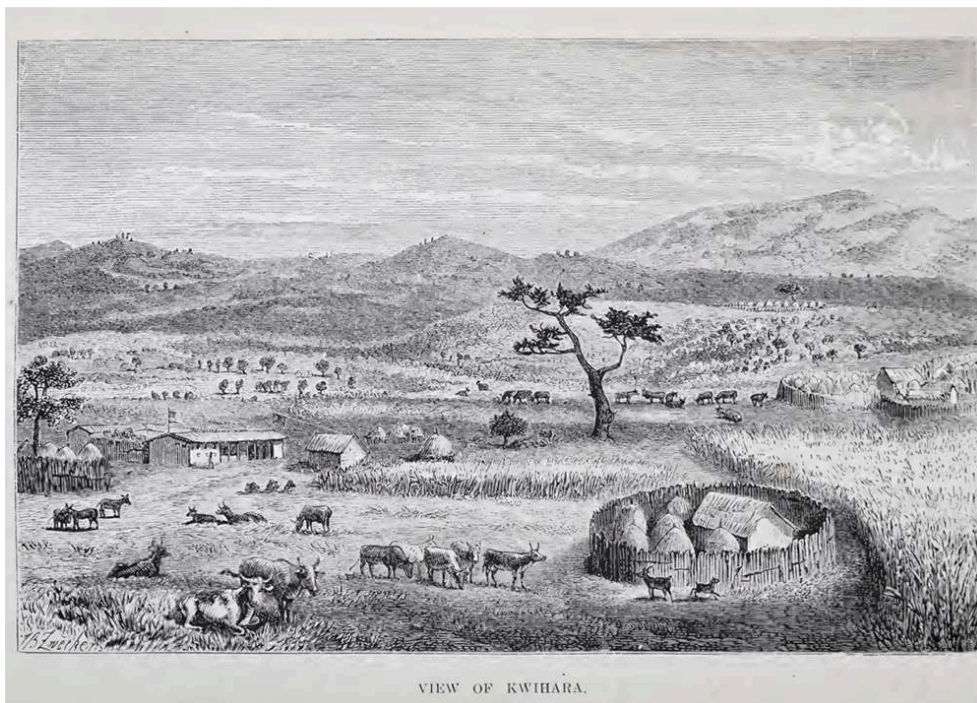
despite no longer being involved in long-distance trade, could still keep up with Tabora's coastal standard of living.<sup>97</sup> The Arabs of Tabora did not build mosques or schools, as they prayed in their houses. As noted by the White Fathers, very few local people in Tabora converted to Islam, and the Muslim population mainly comprised the coastal traders themselves along with their slaves and concubines.<sup>98</sup> The Arab community was far from united, and this became evident when the Germans occupied the area. The plantation owners of Tabora, under the guidance of the *wali*, supported the Germans and signed a treaty with them in 1890. On the contrary, the traders, mainly those resident in Kwihara, saw the Germans as commercial competitors and supported *mtemi* Isike in his resistance to German occupation.<sup>99</sup>

- 35 In Kinyamwezi, "Kwihara" means "in the open" or "in the clearing".<sup>100</sup> According to Livingstone, it meant "the middle of cultivation"<sup>101</sup> and Kwihara—as well as Sokoni—was indeed home to many Arab plantation owners.<sup>102</sup> These were former traders who, once established in Unyanyembe, switched to the cultivation of agricultural products.<sup>103</sup> Speke noted that many Arabs, instead of "appearing [as] merchants, as they did formerly, [...] looked more like great farmers, with huge stalls of cattle attached to their houses".<sup>104</sup> One famous example was Salim bin Sef, one of the richest Arabs of Tabora who owned many slaves and "immense plantations of manioc and wheat".<sup>105</sup>
- 36 The plain where Tabora was situated was rich in water. According to Father Combarieu, "Pour trouver l'eau dans tous les tembes [square houses]<sup>106</sup> de la ville, on n'aurait pas à creuser à plus de 1m ou 1m50."<sup>107</sup> As a result, the area was "exceedingly fertile" and suitable for the cultivation of cereals, fruit and vegetables.<sup>108</sup> With the development of long-distance trade, food production had to be expanded to support the thousands of porters as well as landless people living in town. This led to the development of a system of commercial agriculture characterized by innovations in farming methods as well as the introduction of new crops, especially rice and cassava.<sup>109</sup> The addition of these crops produced important social changes, as they could be preserved for long periods and Unyanyembe's residents were consequently less dependent on the *mtemi*'s grain reserves in cases of famine.<sup>110</sup> Increasing human settlement and the expansion of agricultural production led to the clearing of a large area for farming. This in turn created an extensive zone free from the tse-tse fly while also making it possible to keep large herds of cattle and goats, which provided the population with "an ample supply of milk, cream, butter and ghee".<sup>111</sup>
- 37 Many families needed extra labour to increase agricultural production and this need drove them to purchase slaves. As Andrew Roberts has noted, the development of long-distance trade changed the value and use of slaves in Unyamwezi.<sup>112</sup> Nyamwezi men spent long periods away, engaged in trade and employed as porters in the caravans. Porters sometimes spent years working in the caravans before returning home and, for some of them, it became a life-long occupation. This gave rise to a new demand for labour that was satisfied with the importation of slaves. Residents had the means to purchase slaves thanks to the accumulation of wealth derived from interregional and long-distance trade.<sup>113</sup> This fact has been confirmed in relation to several interior societies, not only the Nyamwezi but also the Nyika and Kamba.<sup>114</sup> Tabora was an important transit place for slaves being taken to the coast. The Nyamwezi were not slave traders, but Unyanyembe was a slave-buying place. Slaves were obtained from the interlacustrine area and Manyema and kept temporarily in Tabora on their way to the coast. Many slaves were also retained in Tabora to be employed in agriculture and as

domestic servants. Between one hundred and three hundred slaves were kept in the estates of important merchants, and the overall population of Tabora was formed by a large number of slaves.<sup>115</sup> Many slaves also arrived with the caravans from the coast and established themselves in Tabora. These were often slave artisans (*fundi*) who worked as blacksmiths, tinkers, masons, carpenters, tailors, potters and rope-makers.<sup>116</sup> Slaves were also permitted to own land. Father Léonard reports one slave, Songoro, who owned a total of four properties in Tabora.<sup>117</sup> The explorer James Augustus Grant likewise provides an account of a freed slave who “had been a slave all his life, [but] now possessed a village with farm and cattle”.<sup>118</sup>

- 38 The population of Tabora was also formed by free migrant people who had moved to the town in search of opportunities: these included small-scale traders, people employed by caravans, tailors, rope-makers and smiths who came from neighbouring regions such as modern-day Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and Zambia, as well as from the coast.<sup>119</sup> This made Tabora a cosmopolitan settlement to which different groups of immigrants moved temporarily or permanently, bringing with them their material culture, language, way of dressing, and religion. Such a social mix provided Tabora with that cosmopolitan flavour that inspired some European travellers to define it as “the Paris of East Africa” or “a second Zanzibar”.<sup>120</sup>
- 39 Unlike the Kwikuru, Kwihara was not fortified (see Fig. 4).<sup>121</sup> Various roads set out from Kwihara, one going towards Mfuto—another settlement of coastal traders—to the west, another one heading south towards Ugunda, and one connecting Kwihara to Kwikuru. A fourth road passed in between two hills and connected Kwihara to the commercial heart of Tabora, Sokoni (see Fig. 2).<sup>122</sup>

Figure 4: A view of Kwihara



SOURCE: H.M. STANLEY, 1872.

## Sokoni, the commercial heart of Tabora

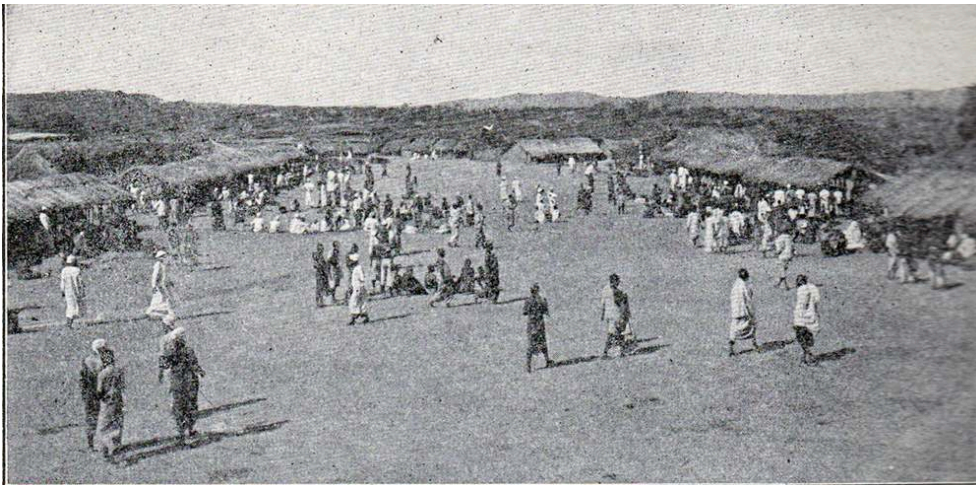
- 40 The market was located in the north-eastern part of Tabora. It was the most heavily populated area of the town and, when Stanley visited in the 1870s, it contained about a thousand huts and *tembes* and a population of approximately 5,000 people (see Tab. 1).<sup>123</sup> This part of the town was called either Tabora or Sokoni, which is Kiswahili for “the place of the market”. In the market, goods and merchandise were displayed under covered shelters arranged to form small streets. The place was characterized by a large, empty square (see Fig. 5) which was used by the caravans, often containing hundreds of porters, that stopped in the market to buy supplies. Around the square stood the *tembes* in which the traders stored their goods.<sup>124</sup>

Tab. –Population of Tabora 1871–1913

Year	Total Population	Europeans
1871	5,000	...
1895	15,000	28
1899	15,000	36
1903	30,000	37
1909	37,000	89
1913	40,000	150
1921	20,000	...

SOURCES: H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 264; J.A. MOLONEY, 1893, p. 68; *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, 6, 1895, p. 413; *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, 7, 1896, p. 185; H. DAUBER, 1991, p. 162; “Denkschrift über die Entwicklung von Deutsch-Ostafrika im Jahre 1898-1899”, p. 266; F. NOLAN, 1977, p. 259, O. RAUM, 1965, p. 259; GREAT BRITAIN NAVAL INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, 1916, p. 189; “Tabora”, *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 23 (13), 1906, p. 119; J. KOPONEN, 1995, p. 621; *Bevölkerungsstatistik Deutsch-Ostafrika*, RKA 1001/7428; TANGANYIKA TERRITORY, 1931 p. 14.

Figure 5: The market of Tabora during the German colonial period (1907–1914)



Source: Colonial Image Archive, University Library Frankfurt/Germany, Image Number 027-1430-39.

- 41 As Bill Freund points out, urban life in 19th-century Africa centred on the market.<sup>125</sup> The periodicity of markets in Eastern Africa was connected to their importance in terms of goods traded and number of attending merchants: daily markets were a characteristic of larger urban centres, whereas weekly ones were common in the rural areas.<sup>126</sup> Tabora hosted a daily market that, according to Jerome Becker, displayed “une animation extraordinaire”.<sup>127</sup> Here, caravans could obtain water and a huge variety of foodstuffs including rice, sorghum, maize, peanuts, sesame, manioc, sugar canes, beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, wheat, and meat.<sup>128</sup> Tabora was one of the few markets in the interior where caravans could always find butter and fresh milk, products that were brought to the market daily in large calabashes by the local Tutsi cattle herders.<sup>129</sup> The Tutsi had arrived in Unyamwezi in the late 18th–early 19th century from Buha, Burundi, Rwanda and Karagwe. Part of the wealth the Nyamwezi accumulated through long-distance trade was used to buy cattle. Nyamwezi cattle owners made agreements with Tutsi herders who took care of herding their cattle and distributing and selling the resulting dairy products at the market. The resulting patron–client relationship allowed Nyamwezi cattle owners to continue to take part in long-distance trade.<sup>130</sup> The Tutsi were a significant immigrant group in Unyamwezi. The earliest detailed quantitative data on the ethnic composition of Tabora district is from the 1931 census carried out by the British in the Tanganyika Territory, and Tabora is reported as the district with the largest Tutsi population.<sup>131</sup> The Tutsi lived in between the three main settlements of Kwikuru, Kwihara and Sokoni. Their houses had the characteristic form of a bee-hive and were grouped in clusters of two or three.<sup>132</sup> The Tutsi kept their cattle in the area around their houses.
- 42 Another product that could be found consistently and in abundance at the market was meat. The German military officer Wilhem Langheld, who visited Tabora in 1890, reported that many people went to the market specifically to buy meat. To satisfy the demand, approximately 5–6 cows and 40–50 goats and sheep were slaughtered each day.<sup>133</sup>
- 43 The products of the *miombo* woodland surrounding Tabora—such as bark containers, honey and beeswax—were also on sale at the market.<sup>134</sup> Thanks to the role of the Nyamwezi as intermediaries in interregional trade networks, goods and supplies such



as salt, iron hoes, tobacco, palm oil and dried fish were imported from neighbouring regions.<sup>135</sup> The export goods associated with long-distance trade were not generally traded at the market itself. The price of ivory and slaves was, in fact, negotiated in the houses of the most important merchants.<sup>136</sup> In contrast, imported goods from the coast, including cloth, glass beads and metal wires used to buy ivory and slaves, were available at the market.<sup>137</sup> Of these, glass beads from Venice were particularly important as they were used as market currency.<sup>138</sup> One of the developments that contributed to making Tabora the centre of caravan trade in the interior was, in fact, the adoption of a recognized currency that was accepted and used by all the traders attending the market.<sup>139</sup> Captain Stairs found that, in the market of Tabora, food was displayed in small quantities equivalent to the value of a string of beads.<sup>140</sup> The existence of a bead currency in the Tabora market reflected the need for a recognized exchange rate through which the different types of currencies used along the interregional and long-distance caravan routes could be positioned in relation to one another. According to Burton, the market of Msene in Western Unyamwezi also had a recognized currency in the form of beads, in this case the white and blue glass beads called *sofi*.<sup>141</sup> Beverly Brown reports that these beads were also used in Ujiji.<sup>142</sup> The towns that developed along the caravan roads of 19th-century East Africa, therefore, shared the same business practices and financial institutions and this facilitated the expansion of trade. In Tabora and Ujiji it was also possible to obtain bills of credit from the coastal traders living in town. These bills could be repaid on the coast. As a matter of fact, sometimes caravans from the coast arrived in the interior markets without the goods needed to buy provisions to continue their journey. With these bills of credit, caravans were able to purchase cloth, glass beads and metal wires that could be used as currency during their onward journeys. The coastal residents of Tabora, in fact, regularly received shipments of wires, beads and cloth from the coast. This was a profitable area of trade for the coastal residents of Tabora, as the value of import goods increased by about one hundred per cent from the coast to Tabora, and a further fifty per cent from Tabora to Ujiji.<sup>143</sup> At the time of Burton's visit in 1857, the price of beads and cloth was as much as five times higher in Tabora than on the coast.<sup>144</sup> Tabora could therefore be converted into a "second point of departure" for trading expeditions.<sup>145</sup>

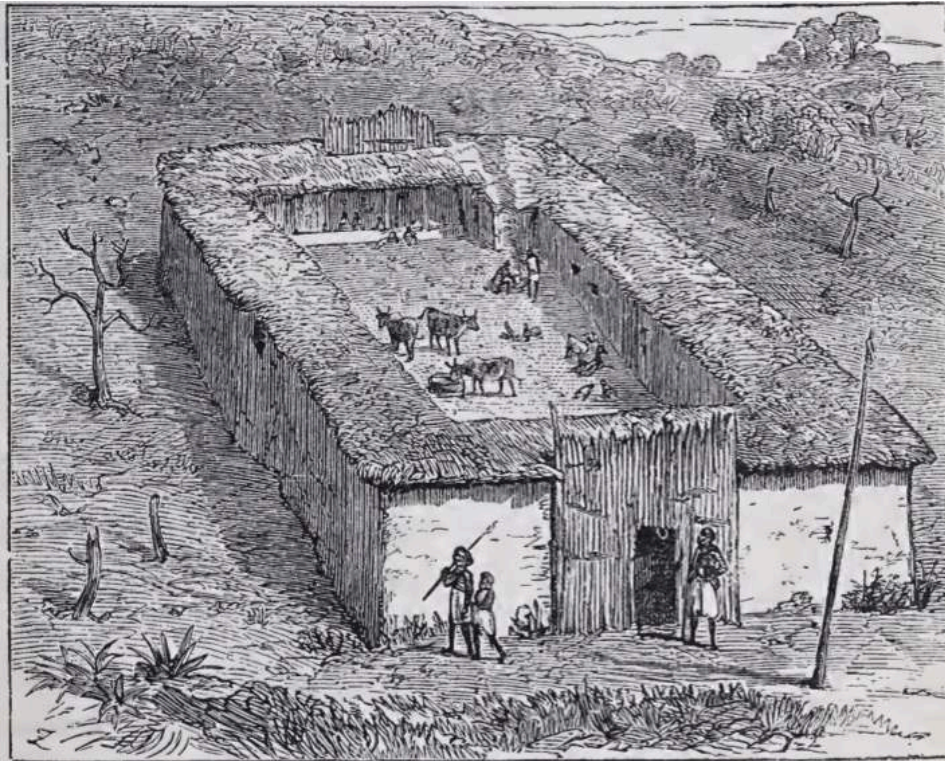
- 44 Sokoni hosted the houses and properties of coastal and Nyamwezi traders who had obtained the land from the *mtemi*. The properties in the market area were largely owned by Arabs and Indians, many of whom resided not in Tabora but rather on the coast, in Bagamoyo, or in Zanzibar. The surrounding areas, especially towards the hill of Rufita, were owned by Nyamwezi, Ganda and Sukuma people who had acquired ownership of the land by "cultivating it for a long time".<sup>146</sup> Some Unyamwezi ministries also lived in Tabora. For example, Fundi Sungura, one of *mtemi* Isike's most important advisers, lived in a *tembe* facing onto the market and from there kept the *mtemi* informed as to what was happening in the market.<sup>147</sup> The Kwikuru was located a two-hour's march from Sokoni.

Figure 6: A view of Tabora (not dated)



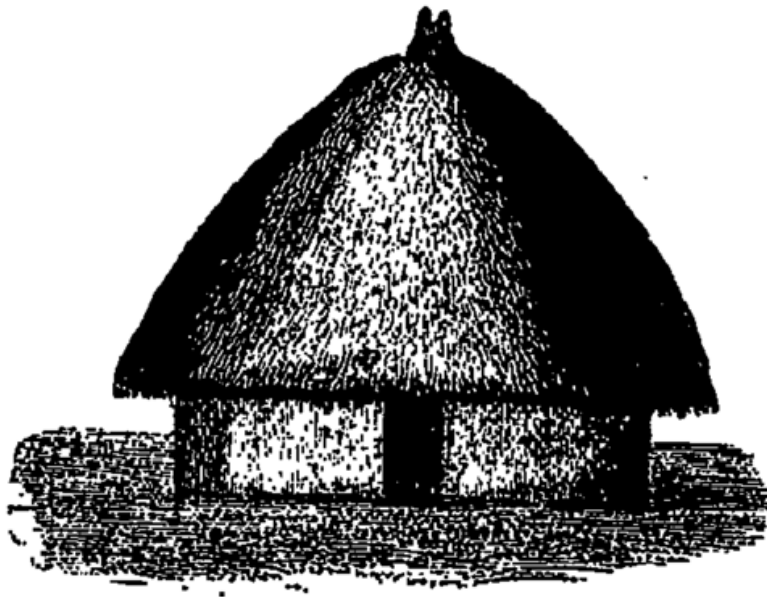
Source: Courtesy of Photothèque, A.G.M. Afr.

- 45 The entire settlement of Sokoni was protected by a palisade of euphorbia and hidden by bush and trees (see Fig. 6).<sup>148</sup> The typical building in which the coastal traders lived was the *tembe*. The coastal-style *tembe* was a modification of the hinterland-style *tembe* found in Central and Western Tanzania, consisting of a large square building made of clay bricks with a flat deck (see Fig. 7).<sup>149</sup> The typical *tembe* had a large wooden door that was generally made locally by slave artisans; sometimes, rich and well-known traders imported carved doors from the coast. The main door led to the *barzah*, or vestibule, a hall or outer room sheltered by a veranda where the house's master received his guests, served coffee, and carried out trade negotiations.<sup>150</sup> After the *barzah* was a square with the various rooms opening onto a courtyard.<sup>151</sup> The rooms did not have outward-facing doors or windows, but only small openings to allow air flow. The main room of the house featured a clay bench and led to a dark closet in which merchandise and supplies were stored (see Fig. 1). There were separate lodgings for the concubines and slaves, many of whom lived outside the *tembe*.<sup>152</sup> Each *tembe* had an orchard with fruit trees imported from the coast. Arthur Dodgshun, who visited the *tembe* of Said bin Ali, reported that its orchard contained "mangoes, sweet and sour limes, pomegranates, guavas, coconut and date palms, bananas and other delicacies".<sup>153</sup> The *tembes* were situated at a distance of about 200 metres from each other and each one had its own name.<sup>154</sup> When Burton visited Tabora there were six *tembes*.<sup>155</sup> When Stanley visited in 1871 there were 36 *tembes*, and in 1895 the number had increased to 90.<sup>156</sup> According to Livingstone, each Arab in Tabora had about twenty dependants.<sup>157</sup>

Figure 7: Bird's eye view of a *tembe*

H.M. Stanley, 1872, 253.

- 46 Each *tembe* was surrounded by the houses of these dependants along with the houses of Nyamwezi small peasants and porters, structures known as *msonga* (see Fig. 8).<sup>158</sup> These houses had a round base with a diameter ranging from 4 to 6 metres and a conic-shaped straw roof. The height of the houses varied from 1.5 to 2.5 metres. The house had only one opening, a door that could be closed with either sorghum, straw or leather.<sup>159</sup> This arrangement made each *tembe* look like a village in itself and explains why European observers described Tabora as a collection of villages.

Figure 8: A *msonga*

HUTTE DE L'OUNYAMOUÉSI.

SOURCE: A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 318.

- 47 This peculiar urban fabric was not an indication of unsophisticated structure, as many European observers maintained, but rather a way to protect the settlement from fires as well as to provide access to water. Fire risk was very high for houses built of straw and wood. Living in small villages separated from each other was therefore a way to limit the spread of fires in a town with thousands of inhabitants. According to Joseph Moloney, it was for this reason that the Arabs forbid the Nyamwezi from building too close to their houses. He reports that, “The Arabs have not allowed the natives to build a township like Mwamba’s, but keep the various settlements apart; the square houses of the former and conical huts of the latter alternating in a picturesque confusion.”<sup>160</sup> Another factor was the availability of water. The supply of water depended on the several wells situated in different parts of the town, and each *tembe* was built close to an isolated well. In this way, it was easy for the inhabitants of the *tembe* and surrounding *msongas* to access water. The need for water availability led people to build their houses in close proximity to the *tembes* of the coastal traders, thus shaping the urban form of Tabora according to environmental conditions and historically contingent social processes.
- 48 By taking into consideration the conditions and specificities of the context in which they developed, African cities do not appear “ontologically distinct” from other urban settings throughout the world<sup>161</sup> and, at the same time, it is possible to capture their “heterogeneity and unconventional nature [...] both past and present”.<sup>162</sup> The urban structure of Tabora, in fact, was consistent with that of other cities in precolonial Africa where it was fairly common to find towns that included multiple different enclosed settlements, for safety and symbolic reasons.<sup>163</sup>

## Conclusion

- 49 The development of an urban settlement is a long-term process, for which it is not clearly possible to establish a precise beginning.<sup>164</sup> As David Anderson and Richard Rathbone note in the introduction to a volume that in many ways has sparked a new development in the field of African urban historical studies, one of the main limiting tendencies in writing about Africa's urban history has been the acceptance of the African town as a product of colonization, and, therefore, as a modern creation.<sup>165</sup> There is no doubt that colonialism represented a turning point in the history of urbanization in Africa: new cities were created and already existing ones were transformed to serve the economic and strategic needs of colonial powers. However, this colonial transformation necessarily “built on earlier urban elements, the heritage of which it is important to understand” by “being sensitive to the continuities and the ruptures of the preceding eras”.<sup>166</sup>
- 50 Tabora was occupied by the Germans in 1893.<sup>167</sup> The economy of the town continued to be based on the ivory trade, still controlled by Arab and African traders and now taxed by the colonial authorities. There was a very limited European presence in the town, owing to the hostility of the traders of Tabora towards European merchants. The house of the only German trader who resided in Tabora, Weinberger, was set on fire twice.<sup>168</sup> In 1902, even the *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft*—the most important commercial company of the colony—abandoned its branch in Tabora in view of the narrow profits it had made there.<sup>169</sup> As a consequence, the urban structure of Tabora remained almost untouched: the descriptions of the town during the early colonial period were very similar to those of early visitors such as Burton and Speke. The explorer Franz Stuhlmann, for instance, reported that in the 1890s Tabora “is not a closed town, but is formed by a number of scattered farmsteads, where the Arabs live with their followers, each with its own name”.<sup>170</sup> The explorer Paul Reichard confirmed that Tabora was not a town as “we would intend it”.<sup>171</sup>
- 51 The District Officer August Leue gave this description of Tabora in 1895:
- Tabora is located in a basin gently sloping southward, surrounded by a chain of hills. It consists of three parts: the real Tabora, called Sokoni for short, Gambo and Kihara [sic]. The entire expanse of the built-up area, which consists almost exclusively of farms, amounts to about two hours. The part called Tabora (Sokoni) is the largest. This includes the government station and the market (soko), the houses of the wali and the most important merchants and represents the real place where the caravans gather. There are about 90 tembes (square houses) here, almost all of which are surrounded by orchards, shamba and numerous thatched huts. Since each tembe is located in a small grove of mango, date, lemon and other fruit trees, Tabora makes a great impression, especially to those who look at it from the top of the hill behind Gambo.<sup>172</sup>
- 52 It was only in 1912, with the arrival in Tabora of the railway built by the Germans, that the urban plan of Tabora started to be altered. The *Bebaungsplan für den Ort Tabora* was issued on 12 May 1912 and sanctioned the division of Tabora along ethnic lines.<sup>173</sup>
- 53 The 19th-century spatial organization of Tabora was related to the way the political life of the town was organized. The transformation and construction of the urban space was related to the socio-political institutions that shaped the city, including in symbolic terms. The Kwikuru, the site embodying the political power of the *mtemi*, was also the place where the head of the coastal community lived. The fact that the Kwikuru was

situated on the main caravan road arriving from the coast connected Tabora and its political and economic institutions to the wider world of the Swahili coast and, ultimately, to the commercial and cultural world of the Indian Ocean. The willingness of the local population to provide goods to immigrants and caravan personnel, the combination of local food production and agricultural innovation, and the division of labour between Tutsi herders and Nyamwezi and coastal farmers created the conditions for the town's development. As long-distance trade expanded, the population of Tabora increased and its composition became more complex, with the migration of individuals and groups of immigrants bearing different interests and identities that created a "lived space" shaped by historically contingent social and economic processes.<sup>174</sup> The case of Tabora is an example of the plurality of the urban phenomena in precolonial Africa and of the importance of situating the study of African cities in the specific historical, environmental and political context in which they developed.

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## NOTES

1. A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 304.
2. J. VERNE, 1863, p. 78-79. Verne called Tabora "Kaseh" (see below).
3. Today, Tabora is a city in central-western Tanzania, the capital of the Tabora Region, with a population of 160,608 inhabitants; see Tanzania, Population and Housing Census, 2012.
4. R.W. BEACHEY, 1967, p. 274; E.A. ALPERS, 1974; A. SHERIFF, 1987; M. CHAIKLIN, 2010; K. PALLAVER, 2016.
5. See E.A. ALPERS, 1974; A. SHERIFF, 1987; G. CAMPBELL, 2005; J.G. DEUTSCH, 2006; S. DOYLE, H. MÉDARD, 2007; H. MÉDARD, M.L. DERAT, T. VERNET, M.P. BALLARIN, 2013.
6. A comprehensive discussion of the development of long-distance trade in 19th-century East Africa is beyond the scope of this paper; for some general overviews, see J. ILIFFE, 1979, p. 40-87; A. SHERIFF, 1987; J. KOPONEN, 1988; J. GLASSMAN, 1995; S. ROCKEL, 2006a.
7. B. FREUND, 2007, p. 46. For a discussion on settlement patterns in precolonial Tanzania, see J. KOPONEN, 1988, p. 345-359. For an overview of the urban history of East Africa, see A. BURTON, 2002.
8. C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, 2005a, p. 213; J. PARKER, 2000, p. XXII.
9. B. BROWN, W.T. BROWN, 1976, p. 198.
10. As cited in J. ABU LUGHOD, 1989, p. 13-14; Other works on East African towns include S. FABIAN, 2019 and W.T. BROWN, 1971 on Bagamoyo; S. ROCKEL, 2006b on Mpwapwa; B. BROWN, 1973 on Ujiji.
11. The prefix "U-" is used in Kiswahili to indicate a land or region; therefore, Unyamwezi is the "land of the Nyamwezi". The name "Nyamwezi" – that means in Kiswahili "people of the moon" – was first used by people on the coast to refer to traders coming from the west, where the moon is first seen. It was therefore not the name of an ethnic group but a collective name used to refer to various groups of people who had their own names for themselves. Later, the ethnonym was appropriated by people of the region and further reified by its usage by Europeans during the colonial period. See A. ROBERTS, 1968, p. 117; J.P. CHRÉTIEN, 1989.
12. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 115.
13. J.R. BRENNAN, 2013, p. 40-42.
14. *Chronique Trimestrielle*, January 1879, 1.
15. J.A. MOLONEY, 1893.
16. Another example in this sense is Mpwapwa; see S. ROCKEL, 2006b, p. 13.
17. A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 304.
18. *Journal de Kipalapala*, 22 May 1886, Archives Générales de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (hereafter A.G.M.Afr.), Rome.
19. The *wali* or *liwali* was the highest-ranked local official in the Omani state apparatus; see J. GLASSMAN, 1995, XVI; R.F. BURTON, 1860, vol. 1, p. 329.
20. R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 181; see also A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 79-80.

21. R.F. BURTON, 1860, vol. 1, p. 327; see also T. MCDOW, 2018, p. 88.
22. R.F. BURTON, 1860, vol. 1, p. 224.
23. A.C. UNOMAH, 1970b.
24. H. LÉONARD, *Notes sur Tabora, (particulièrement sur les Arabes)* 1923–1925, manuscript, A.G.M.Afr.
25. C. VELTEN, 1901, p. 8-11.
26. A *mwungwana* (pl. *waungwana*) was a gentleman, patrician, refined urban Muslim, a “civilized” person from the coast; the opposite was *mshenzi*, a “barbarian” and “pagan”, generally from the interior; see J. GLASSMAN, 1995, p. XVI. This was not the social group of slave origin that also took up the collective name “Waungwana”; see S. ROCKEL, 2009.
27. “Arab” is a term that is often ambiguous in the sources and used to refer to people of either Omani or Swahili origin. According to Burton, the coastal traders who resided in Tabora were largely of Omani origin, whereas Swahili traders from the coast were settled at Msene, in Western Unyamwezi; see R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 188.
28. Muhina bin Slemani Le’urubi is mentioned by Stanley in his Plan of Unyanyembe (see Fig. 2). Therefore, it is quite unlikely he was the founder of the first Arab settlement in Tabora. The second was Unakwitwa Bahareni, which was owned by an Arab called Saidi bin Ali. The third village was named Lufita and owned by Said bin Salum and Mwenyi Mlenda, a man from the coast. The third village was called Mkowani, owned by the Arab Saidi bin Habibu el-Afif. The fifth village was called Bomani and owned by an Arab whose name is Seti bin Juma. The sixth village was called Mbugani, owned by an Arab called Salum bin Ali. The seventh was called Tshemtshem, owned by an Indian whose name was Juma bin Dina. The eighth village was called Ngambo, owned by an Arab whose name was Muhamed bin Nasur. The ninth village was Mbirani, owned by the Arab Ali bin Sultani. The tenth village name was Malolo, owned by an Arab, Rashid bin Salum. The eleventh was Kwihara, owned by an Arab whose name was Abdallah bin Nasibu. The twelfth was Gange, owned by an Arab, Thani bin Abdallah. The thirteenth was Miemba, owned by the Arab Farhani bin Othmani. Another village was Ituru, owned by the Arab Mohammadi bin Juma, the father of Tipu Tip (Hahmed bin Mohammadi), who had married Chief Fundikira’s daughter, and his relative Mohammed bin Said El-Wardi; see C. VELTEN, 1901, p. 8-9.
29. N. CARRÉ, 2014, p. 10; 107.
30. T. VON PRINCE, Tabora, 28 January 1893, Bundesarchivabteilungen, Reichskolonialamt (hereafter RKA), Berlin, 1001/1030-4160.
31. *Rapport du Père Guillet*, Tabora, 8 October, 1881, A.G.M.Afr. C 20-62 (my translation). “Chemchem” is the Kiswahili for “spring of water”.
32. C.T. WILSON, W. FELKIN, 1882, vol. 1, p. 133.
33. A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 304; J. MARISSAL, 1979, p. 225.
34. J.H. SPEKE, 1864, p. 97.
35. When Stanley asked about the location of Kazeh to the trader and *wali* of Tabora Sayd bin Salim, Sayd replied that he had never heard the name before. He stated said that in Kinyamwezi Kazeh meant “kingdom” and that a settlement with this name had never existed; see H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 190.
36. L. BIGON, 2016, p. V; Kazeh is today a name of a hill in the Tabora area, which in the maps of the German colonial period was called “Kazehberg”; see *German Maps* (hereafter GM), East Africana Collection (hereafter EAF) 81, 5 May 1914, University Library of Dar es Salaam; F. SPELLIG, 1927, p. 204.
37. H. LÉONARD, *Notes sur Tabora (particulièrement sur les Arabes)*, 1923–25, manuscript, A.G.M.Afr.
38. N.R. BENNETT, 1970, p. 25-26. For an interesting discussion of the etymological history of the name of another East African town, Bagamoyo, see W.T. BROWN, 2016, p. 37-44. In the Swahili language, “Ki” is the prefix for “language”; therefore Kinyamwezi means “the language of the Nyamwezi”.

39. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 81.
40. R.G. ABRAHAMS, 1967, p. 38; A. ROBERTS, 1970, p. 41.
41. A. ROBERTS, 1968; A. ROBERTS, 1970.
42. A.C. UNOMAH, 1970a.
43. J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 22.
44. S. ROCKEL, 2006a.
45. A. GUILLET to MAISON MAIRE (hereafter MM), Tabora, 8 October 1881, A.G.M.Afr. C 20-62.
46. A. DODGSHUN to J. KIRK, Unyanyembe, 27 January 1879, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), London, FO 84/1547; P. LIVINHAC, Sainte Marie près de Roubaga, 9 September 1879, A.G.M.Afr. C 11-12.
47. Besides Tabora, other settlements developed in Unyamwezi as a consequence of long-distance trade; see A.C. UNOMAH, 1970a; T. MCDOW, 2018, p. 124.
48. A.C. UNOMAH, 1970a.
49. R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 180.
50. R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 180-181; Burton's description of Tabora as a collection of villages was confirmed by later travellers. See, among others, P. HASSING, N.R. BENNETT, 1962, p. 137; J. THOMSON, 1881, p. 189.
51. R.G. ABRAHAMS, 1967; A.C. UNOMAH, 1970b.
52. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 121.
53. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 122.
54. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 122; R.G. ABRAHAMS, 1967, p. 37-41.
55. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 124; S. ROCKEL, 2012, p. 164.
56. J. ILIFFE, 1979, p. 61-62.
57. The chief had the right to demand one tusk of every two "produced" in his chiefdom; however, this was not always fully enforced, and ivory hunters were required to send only part of their tusks to the *mtemi*.
58. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 92-94.
59. H. LÉONARD, *Notes sur Tabora (particulièrement sur les Arabes)*, 1923-25, A.G.M.Afr.; P. REICHARD, 1892, p. 345; Kwikuru meant "chief village" or "capital city"; see E. HORE, 1892, p. 56; R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 180.
60. *Journal de Kipalapala*, entries of 3 March 1885, 5 October 1885, 3 October 1886, A.G.M.Afr.
61. *Journal de Kipalapala*, February 1885; December 1887; July 1888, A.G.M.Afr.
62. S. WYNNE-JONES, 2010, p. 221.
63. A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 286.
64. J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 214-215.
65. ANONYMOUS, 1884, p. 191.
66. P. REICHARD, 1890, p. 67; "Extrait du Journal des Missionnaires du Nyanza", Kwihara, Unyanyembe, October - November 1878, in *Chronique Trimestrielle*, 1879, 2.
67. R. REID, 1998; A. SHORTER, 1968; N.R. BENNETT, 1963; N.R. BENNETT, 1968; A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 121.
68. *Journal de Kipalapala*, entries of 3 and 4 December 1886, A.G.M.Afr.
69. J.H. SPEKE, 1864, p. 77.
70. For a detailed reconstruction of the events, see N.R. BENNETT, 1968, p. 222 and ff.; J.H. SPEKE, 1864, p. 84-123; B. BROWN, W.T. BROWN, 1976, p. 194-195; see also M. MOYD, 2014, p. 74.
71. H. LÉONARD, *Notes sur Tabora (particulièrement sur les Arabes)*, 1923-25, A.G.M.Afr.
72. N.R. BENNETT, 1975, p. 57.
73. *Journal de Père Deniaud*, 3 December 1879, A.G.M.Afr. C 11-18; P. COMBARIEU to MM, Tabora, 27 December 1879, A.G.M.Afr. C 14-282.

74. *Journal de Père Deniaud*, 3 December 1879, A.G.M.Afr C 11-18; P. Combarieu to MM, Tabora, 27 December 1879, A.G.M.Afr C 14-282; Kirk to Derby, Zanzibar, 4 April 1878, TNA FO 84/1414; N.R. BENNETT, 1975.
75. A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 286.
76. A. SHERIFF, 1987, p. 193; B. BROWN, W.T. BROWN, 1976, p. 195.
77. T. MCDOW, 2018, p. 141.
78. N. BENNETT, 1975, p. 55.
79. D.C. SPERLING, 2000, p. 288; A. SMITH, 1963, p. 287.
80. B. BROWN, W.T. BROWN, 1976, p. 192.
81. *Journal de Kipalapala*, 3 March 1885, A.G.M.Afr; P. Hauttecoeur to MM, Kipalapala, 14 February 1889, A.G.M.Afr C 20-198; *Journal de Kipalapala*, 17 January 1889 A.G.M.Afr.
82. The 1889 block lasted from 17 January to 11 April; see *Journal de Kipalapala*, 11 April 1889, A.G.M.Afr.
83. *Erklärung. Abschrift von Anlage zu 2121*, Tabora, 14 January 1893, RKA 1001/1030-2121; J. ILIFFE, 1979, p. 103.
84. A. LEUE, Tabora, 30 October 1895, RKA 1001/1030-1056. See also GM 85 *Plan von Tabora*, EAF.
85. F. NOLAN, 1977, p. 269. According to the White Fathers, he was well respected not only by the Arab community, but also by the other components of Tabora society; see *Diaire de St. Boniface de Tabora*, 8 October 1900; 9 February 1903, A.G.M.Afr.
86. S. WYNNE-JONES, S. CROUCHER, 2007; S. WYNNE-JONES, 2010.
87. A. GOTTBURG, 2012, p. 96.
88. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 78.
89. R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 188; see also H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 264.
90. T. MCDOW, 2018, p. 104-106. The Swahili traders of Msene—an eight-day march from Tabora—later moved to Unyanyembe and established small colonies, such as Mfuto, which was connected to Kwihara by a direct road; A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 80.
91. D. LIVINGSTONE, 1874, vol. 2, p. 182.
92. A. SHERIFF, 1987, p. 193.
93. R.F. BURTON, 1860, vol. 1, p. 328.
94. T. MCDOW, 2018, p. 107; on the development of new forms of consumerism in 19th-century East Africa, see J. PRESTHOLDT, 2008.
95. H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 264-265.
96. P. HAUTTECOEUR, Tabora, 25 December 1882, A.G.M.Afr. C 20-104 (my translation). A similar description of the condition of the Arabs of Tabora can be found in C. VELTEN, 1901, p. 9.
97. A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 117.
98. P. GUILLET to MM, Tabora, 20 August 1881, A.G.M.Afr. C 16-73; W. BLOHM, 1931, vol. 1, p. 176; D.C. SPERLING, 2000, p. 288-289; for a description of a harem in Tabora, see J.A. GRANT, 1864, p. 49.
99. LT. HERMANN, Tabora, 2 April 1892, RKA 1001/1030-6381; see K. PALLAVER, 2010, p. 122.
100. F. LONGLAND, 1963, p. 84; N.R. BENNETT, 1970, p. 20.
101. D. LIVINGSTONE, 1874, vol. 2, p. 224.
102. P. GUILLET, Tabora, 8 October 1881, A.G.M.Afr. C 20-62.
103. Some of the plantation owners had moved from the coast to Tabora after the 1873 abolition treaty between the Sultan of Zanzibar and the British; see R. SCHMIDT, 1894, p. 182.
104. J.H. SPEKE, 1864, p. 91.
105. J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 2, p. 30. The wheat produced in Tabora was renowned for its excellent quality and was grown thanks to an ingenious system of irrigation based on the use of damp hollows. Adolphe Burdo compared this irrigation system to that of the Egyptians and was astonished at how the Arabs had successfully transformed Tabora into a “jardin potager

splendide”; A.L.M. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 301. Burdo produced very detailed and complimentary descriptions of the Arabs and their achievements in Tabora; this was a way to support his idea that the Belgians needed to ally themselves with the Arabs if they wanted to secure a strong position in East Africa. See also J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 222; R.F. BURTON, 1860, vol. 1, p. 225-226; A.L.M. BURDO, 1885, p. 15; A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 306; *Compte-rendus de l'Abbè Guyot*, 1881, A.G.M.Afr. C 20-8.

**106.** The *tembe* was a large square building with a flat roof; for a full description, see below.

**107.** P. COMBARIEU to MM, Tabora, 28 October 1879, A.G.M.Afr. C 14-283.

**108.** H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 264-265; S. ROCKEL, 2019 p. 7.

**109.** C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, 2005a, p. 22; A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 106; S. ROCKEL, 2006a, p. 57.

**110.** A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 117.

**111.** H. MEYER, 1910, p. 274.

**112.** A. ROBERTS, 1970.

**113.** J.G. DEUTSCH, 2006, p. 24; A. ROBERTS, 1970, p. 127.

**114.** R. CUMMINGS, 1973, p. 116.

**115.** A.C. UNOMAH, 1972, p. 100-113; R. REID, 2002, p. 161.

**116.** R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 182.

**117.** H. LÉONARD, *Notes sur Tabora (particulièrement sur les Arabes)*, 1923-25, A.G.M.Afr.

**118.** J.A. GRANT, 1864, p. 50.

**119.** F. STUHLMANN, 1894, p. 61.

**120.** *Chronique Trimestrelle*, 1879, 1; A. Dodgshun, 20 January, 1879, *Journals. From London to Ujiji, 1877-1879*, Council for World Mission (hereafter CWM), SOAS, London.

**121.** A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 304. The reason for this is not clear from the sources. In reality, little information is available on Kwihara, as compared to Tabora and the Kwikuru.

**122.** H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 264-266. The distance from Kwihara to Sokoni was about 45 minutes.

**123.** H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 264.

**124.** J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 2, p. 24.

**125.** B. FREUND, 2007, p. 47.

**126.** P. TYIAMBE ZELEZA, 1993, vol. 1, p. 297.

**127.** J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 2, p. 24.

**128.** J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 222; see also R.F. BURTON, 1860, vol. 1, p. 329.

**129.** J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 211.

**130.** S. ROCKEL, 2019.

**131.** According to the 1931 Census, 11,326 Tutsi resided in Tabora district, out of a total of 21,166 Tutsi population in the entire Tanganyika Territory; TANGANYIKA TERRITORY, 1933. Another census had been carried out in 1921, but it provided details only on the major ethnic groups (Nyamwezi, Sumbwa and Sukuma), whereas the rest of the population was included under the definition “miscellaneous small tribes”; see TANGANYIKA TERRITORY, 1922, p. 9.

**132.** J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 211; P. REICHARD, 1892, p. 345.

**133.** W. LANGHELD, 1909, p. 55.

**134.** A.C. UNOMAH, 1970a; *miombo* is the Kiswahili for the *Brachystegia* tree, which is common in central and southern Africa.

**135.** W. LANGHELD, 1909, p. 54; C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, 2005a, p. 22. Tobacco had been introduced to Africa from the Americas in the late 16th century; C.S. DUVALL, 2017. At the time of Burton’s visit in the interior regions of East Africa, it was a product widely available. It was planted at the end of the rainy season and harvested in October; the best variety was produced in the region of Usambara. According to Burton, in “Unyamwezi all sexes and ages enjoy the pipe”; see R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 404-405.

136. *Rapport du Père Guillet*, Tabora, 8 October 1881, A.G.M.Afr., C 20-62; C. MURPHY to B. FRERE, Zanzibar, 10 March 1874, Royal Geographical Society, London (hereafter RGS), The Verney Lovett Cameron Collection, VLC 3/4; *L'Esclavage en Afrique par un ancien diplomate*, Paris, 1890, p. 320.
137. J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 222.
138. K. PALLAVER, 2009; 2016.
139. A. DODGSHUN, *Journal. From London to Ujiji, 1877-79*, 20 January 1879, Central Africa, Box 1, CWM.
140. As quoted in M.A. QUIGGIN, 1970, p. 102; see also J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 24-27.
141. R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 189.
142. B. BROWN, 1973, p. 72.
143. B. BROWN, W.T. BROWN, 1976, p. 189-190.
144. R.F. BURTON, *Field Notebook, East Coast to Ujiji, 1858*, RGS, The Sir Richard Francis Burton Collection (1852-1880) (hereafter RFB) 1.
145. R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 185; J.H. SPEKE, 1860-1861, p. 12; J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 2, p. 27.
146. Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam, G 8/26 Band 1 1908-1914; for a discussion of private property in Tabora, see K. PALLAVER, 2010, p. 85 and ff.
147. *Journal de Kipalapala*, 11 August 1885, A.G.M. Afr. *Fundi* is the Kiswahili for “craftsman”.
148. R.F. BURTON, *Field Notebook, East Coast to Ujiji, 1858*, RGS RFB 1.
149. J. KOPONEN, 1988, p. 353. A minimum of five families lived in the hinterland-style *tembe*; see ANONYMOUS, 1884, p. 121.
150. J. BECKER, 1887, vol. 1, p. 223; A.M.L. BURDO, 1886, vol. 1, p. 305; R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 182-183. In Kiswahili, the *barzah* was called *baraza*.
151. In the African *tembe*, the livestock was kept inside, in the courtyard; see ANONYMOUS, 1884, p. 173; see Fig. 7.
152. R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 182.
153. A. DODGSHUN, *From Zanzibar to Ujiji*, 14 February 1879, CWM Central Africa, Box 1; see also W. LANGHELD, 1909, p. 54.
154. D. LIVINGSTONE, 1874, vol. 2, p. 224.
155. R.F. BURTON, *Field Notebook, East Coast to Ujiji, 1858*, RGS 1; R.F. BURTON, 1859, p. 326.
156. A. LEUE, Tabora, 30 October 1895, RKA 1001/1030-1056.
157. D. LIVINGSTONE, 1874, vol. 2, p. 182.
158. H.M. STANLEY, 1872, p. 267.
159. P. REICHARD, 1892, p. 358.
160. J.A. MOLONEY, 1893, p. 67.
161. L. FOURCHARD, 2011, p. 224.
162. J.R. BRENNAN, 2013, p. 38.
163. C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, 2005a, p. 19.
164. B. FREUND, 2007, p. 1.
165. D.M. ANDERSON, R. RATHBONE, 2000, p. 11.
166. C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, 2005b, p. 18.
167. For a reconstruction of the events leading to the occupation of Tabora, see K. PALLAVER, 2010, p. 120-126.
168. F. NOLAN, 1977, p. 264; before the colonial occupation, European traders had been firmly opposed by the Arab traders and by Nyamwezi political authorities. The French trader Sergère was obliged to go back to the coast, and the German trader Giesecke was even murdered, it seems by an Arab; see N.R. BENNETT, 1968, p. 225; P. HAUTTECOEUR, Kipalapala, 20 May 1886, A.G.M.Afr. C 20-157.
169. J. BECHER, 1997, p. 93.
170. F. STUHLMANN, 1894, p. 59.



171. P. REICHARD, 1892, p. 34.

172. A. LEUE, Tabora, 30 October 1895, RKA 1001/1030-1056.

173. *Bebaungsplan für den Ort Tabora*, Tabora, 12 May 1912, Tanzania National Archives G 7/247; see K. PALLAVER, 2010, p. 150-156.

174. A.T. CREEKMORE III, K.D. FISCHER, 2014, p. 1-31.

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## ABSTRACTS

This article aims to contribute to the study of the urbanization of caravan-related towns in 19th-century Tanzania by unpacking the way multiple settlements merged into a town that came to be known as Tabora. By following the development of the three settlements that formed Tabora—Kwikuru, Kwihara and Sokoni—this article shows how the urban structure of Tabora was shaped by its commercial role, by the presence of a political power that influenced the organization of the urban space to affirm its authority and display its wealth, and by a community of coastal traders with their own political representative, the *wali*. The analysis points towards the profound relationship between spatial processes of urbanization and the exercise of political power.

Cet article entend contribuer à l'étude de l'urbanisation des villes associées au commerce caravanier au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans l'actuelle Tanzanie, en analysant la façon dont de multiples établissements se sont regroupés dans une ville qui a pris le nom de Tabora. En s'intéressant au développement des trois villages qui ont formé Tabora —Kwikuru, Kwihara et Sokoni— cet article montre comment la structure urbaine de Tabora a été façonnée par son rôle commercial, par la présence d'un pouvoir politique qui a marqué l'organisation de l'espace urbain pour affirmer son autorité et exhiber ses richesses, et par une communauté de commerçants côtiers avec leur propre représentant politique, le *wali*. L'étude met en évidence la relation profonde entre les processus spatiaux d'urbanisation et l'exercice du pouvoir politique.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** urbanization, long-distance trade, market, portering, East Africa

**Mots-clés:** urbanisation, commerce de longue distance, marché, portage

**Geographical index:** Afrique de l'Est, Tanzanie, Tabora

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