

Maritime Transport on Lake Victoria during the Inter-War Period, 1914-1945

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Abstract: This paper describes maritime transportation on Lake Victoria during the interwar period in order to establish the effect of world wars on maritime transport and the impact on the economy. Prior to the First World War, Lake Victoria transport was expanding and became the main mode of transport in the lake region being that road construction around the lake was cumbersome. However, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 interrupted this development and subsequently affected trade in East Africa. Even though transport recovered after the war and demonstrated a lot of potential, but it was later affected by the outbreak of the Second World War though its effects were not as severe as the First World War. A Historical Research Design was used to conduct this study. Non probability sampling methods and procedures were used to identify informants during the collection of primary data. Much of the primary data were gathered from Kenya National Archives and Railways Museum in Nairobi. Secondary data was collected from the relevant publications and other materials. The data obtained were analyzed using content and thematic analysis techniques. This study shows that the outbreak of First World War caused a decline of passenger and commodity transport across the lake because most of the lake ferries were taken over by the navy for the lake patrol. Moreover, lake traffic between Tanganyika and Kisumu was terminated causing a decline of trade commodities from Tanganyika. In the same vein, the export trade of Uganda passing through the port of Kisumu stopped towards the end of 1915. Despite the recovery and the expansion of the transport during the period of peace, dhow traffic subjected lake ferries to competition before the outbreak of the Second World War. Due to the potential of Lake Victoria transport, the government should give it attention and set specific policies that govern its transportation.

Keywords: Lake Victoria Transport, World Wars, Trade, Interwar Period,

1.1 Introduction

The studies which have examined marine transportation during the interwar era indicate that no industry was severely affected by the devastation of the world wars than shipping and subsequently maritime transportation (Ojala and Tenold, 2016). During the two wars, a sizable portion of the maritime cargo was lost at sea. Transport connections to the hinterlands were a key factor in the development of numerous ports in Europe in the late nineteenth century. However, this development was interrupted when the First World War broke out (O'Brien's, 2015). Moreover, there was a forced displacement of port activities from their original locations to new areas to meet the needs of the war (Palmer, 1999). Boahen (1985) further notes that ports grew quickly in regions where there were ongoing military operations in Africa or where shipping facilities were needed. Examples include Mombasa, Dakar, Port Harcourt and Bizerta.

At the start of the twentieth century, Europe was the world's dominant maritime power, and by 1914, the allies held a larger portion of the world's merchant ships. About two-fifths of the 45 million gross registered tonnes of steamships in the world's fleet were British-flagged. Around two million tonnes were owned by the French steam fleet, two million tonnes by the Japanese, four hundred and thirty thousand tonnes by the Italians, and eighty two thousand tonnes by the Russian merchant fleet (Ojala & Tenold, 2016). Nonetheless, the two world wars became a major factor that contributed to the long-term decline of Europe's marine trade monopoly in the twentieth century. Furthermore, the wars disturbed the long-established patterns of international trade, leading to the rise of new powers that replaced European dominance in both maritime transport and global trade (Ojala & Tenold, 2016). The USA and Asia benefited from the opportunity to increase their marine trade. According to Gregory (2008), prior to the start of the First World War, France and Britain initially procured goods for export from their colonies through the sea, particularly those in Africa, before sending them to America and other areas for sale. At the height of the conflict, American sailors were able to conduct direct trade with Africa due to Europe's focus on defending itself (Bertho, 2010).

The world wars of the 20th century posed a problem for the supplies. Europeans heavily relied on maritime transportation to supply them with both raw materials and consumables during the start of the First

World War. The economic extraction operations were aided by the African ports, which were connected to inland transportation infrastructures including inland water transport (Martin & Sunley, 2010). As a result, numerous African coastal and inland ports grew during the colonial era to assist trade and the export of raw commodities from Africa (Oliver, 1958). The Allied naval dominance at sea from the start of the War kept German merchant ships out of the oceans and preserved full control of the maritime routes (Miller, 1914). Germany was no longer allowed to engage in trade with Africa, which was one of her main economic partners abroad (Boahen, 1985). Britain too faced difficulties in supplying its companies and consumers with crucial foreign goods (Klovland, 2017). The First World War ended when German ports both at the sea and at Lake Victoria in East Africa were captured ending all German activities in the region. British navy blockades prevented German East Africa from importing or exporting manufactured goods or receiving any assistance from Germany. Britain was given a League of Nations mandate to govern the German region of East Africa by the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed in June 1919 and implemented in January 1920 (Slavicek, 2010). This implies that the British took full control of maritime transportation of Lake Victoria.

In Africa, the ports which were linked to inland transport infrastructures were meant to facilitate economic extraction processes (Martin & Sunley, 2010). However, the outbreak of the First World War interrupted this period of port expansion and initiated engineering and infrastructural developments meant to meet the requirements of the war. The establishments of internal combustion engines both for the ferries and for road transport were witnessed in Africa. On Lake Victoria, all the steam ships were converted to oil engines in 1914. These included SS "Clement Hill", SS "Nyanza", SS "Winifred", Tug "Percy Anderson" and SS "Sybil". Similarly, the campaign against the Germans in East Africa and the challenge of supplying their commodities forced them to construct a number of motorable roads including that from Dodoma to Tukuyu at the north end of Lake Nyasa, which remarkably reduced to three days, a journey that hitherto was taking two to three weeks. In the same vein, the war and inter-war trade depression reduced the strain on port facilities. Though the investments in new docks quay and basin construction continued, the pace was reduced. Nonetheless, before the Second World War, maritime transportation on Lake Victoria improved as demonstrated by the establishments of many ports and procurements of more ferries. However, Second World War destruction just like the First World War initially upset the maritime transport of the lake before its revival (Palmer, 1999).

This study examined and challenges and the developments of maritime transportation on Lake Victoria during the inter war period. Specifically, it examined how the First World War interrupted the maritime transportation across the lake and subsequently the impact on the maritime trade during the War. The chapter then examined the developments of maritime transportation during the period of peace and during the Second World War.

1.2 Lake Victoria Transport and Trade during the War Period, 1914-1918

The immediate outcome of the war was the total termination of all traffic between Tanzania ports and the port of Kisumu, which resulted to a decline for commodities exported from Tanganyika notably groundnuts, hides and skins, coffee and beeswax. The War interrupted the economic development of the Lake Victoria Zone. The hostilities weakened the socio-economic harmony of the lake basin and the serious consequences resulting from political disunity within the zone. There was a decline of the booking of the lake ferries due to the unavoidable dislocation of traffic from the British zone. The lake ferries were taken over by the navy for the lake patrol services with the exception of four left for ordinary traffic, *SS William Mackinnon*, the *Clement Hill*, the *Rusinga* and the steam tug *Huseni*. At the same time the world prices of raw cotton dropped. Consequently, the Africans around the lake zone reduced its production due to low benefits. The commencement of the war led to the closure of many businesses in Nyanza particularly in Kisumu, being that railroads and lake transport were the major entry and exit of cargo in Nyanza and Kisumu in particular (DC/KSI/1/14).

The situation worsen during 1915-16 as shown in figure 1.1 when more ferries were further taken over by the navy leaving Uganda Railways management with only *Rusinga*, the *Clement Hill*, the steam tug *Huseni* and two 50-ton lighters. Moreover, German attacks on the railway line at Voi at some point nearly brought traffic to a standstill. During November and December of 1915, the export trade of Uganda passing through the port of Kisumu stopped. As a result, a great congestion occurred at the ports and trade in Uganda was carried by storing of cargo in go downs. This was because by June 1916, 9,143 tonnes of goods had already been held up for transport at the various ports on Lake Victoria. The situation was saved in December of the same year by the British military thus the traffic normalized and trade restored. The ferries, which were taken over by the navy, were restored for trade on first January 2017 under the military control and only two boats, some tugs and lighters were left for the war. Despite the control and the cessation of the hostilities on Lake Victoria, the trade of the region remained distressed by the extension of the war elsewhere in East Africa and Europe. The severe hostilities towards the end of the war instigated by the Germans resulted to a restriction of both imports and exports of East Africa, a situation which extended up to the period of peace. This condition impacted severely

on the economy of East Africa. In particular, the people's income was affected and subsequently their purchasing power reduced because they could not export (Ford, 1955).

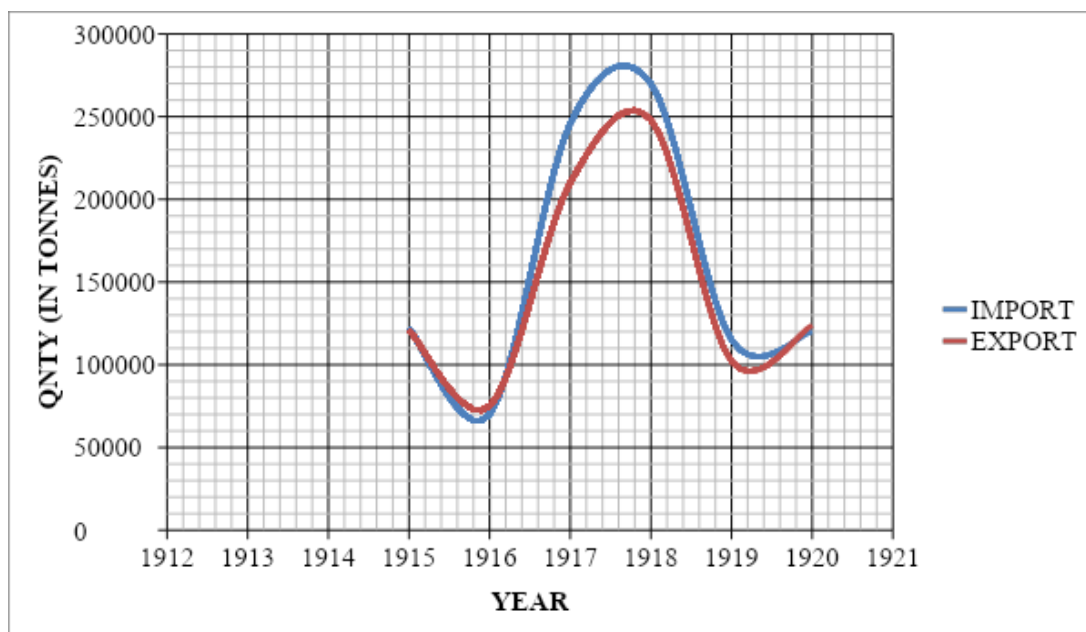


Figure 1.1: Effects of the First World War on Lake Victoria maritime trade

Source: Uganda Railways Annual Report (1914/1915-1919/1920)

Trade in imports was stable until the outbreak of the war in August 1914 when it underwent a rapid decline before it revived later in 1916. Due to the interruptions in trade, there was a reduction in revenues from Nyanza in 1915 compared to 1913/14. However, new arrangements under which trade was conducted were becoming successful and led to increased revenue, which hitherto relied on the native hut tax (PC/NZA/3/6/2/1; Anyumba, 1995). Overton (1989) adds that during the war revenue from custom duties dropped in Kenya as shipping shortages stopped non-essential imports and some exports, yet the objective of the government was that the colonial state was to finance its administration. As a result, heavy taxation was imposed on Kenyans as more taxes that are new were introduced. With such a drop in trade and a decline in the use of the railways and thus less revenue, African taxation remained the only option for the state.

The use of canoes remained popular for transport and fishing during the war. Orango (I.O., 2021) a resident of Karungu, indicates that before the advent of dhows and engine boats, the people travelled from Karungu to Mohuru by use of canoes. Similar sentiments were echoed by Ougo (O.I., 2021) who indicated that the use of canoes improved fishing and was the main mode of transport connecting Asembo and Uyoma. However, at the outbreak of the war in 1914, the colonial government issued the Victoria Nyanza Fish Protection Rules that controlled fishing and movement across the lake. For instance, all the boat owners had to register their boats and issued with licenses to determine the times of fishing and trawling was not allowed near the shore of the Lake and nets of less than one inch were prohibited. Moreover, the state controlled and regulated the migration of people to the beaches from the villages by issuing regulations that determined who should be a fisher and where fishing should take place (Overton, 1989). Registration requirements were too demanding to the Africans boat owners and fishers. A number of African canoe owners could not afford the fees required for licensing and at the same time many canoes were declared unworthy to be used for both fishing and transport. This further affected the African economy because many people relied on fishing for their daily leaving (Nyakiya, O.I., 2021)

1.3 Lake Victoria Transport and Trade during the Period of Peace

Despite the revival of the ferries after the war, dhows subjected them to competition across the lake during the interwar period. Though Arab and Indian traders introduced dhows in Lake Victoria in 1880s purposely to facilitate slave trade, their use declined because the colonial government banned slave trade. The resurgence of dhows occurred in 1925 when the Indian population around the lake was increasing causing a high demand for commodities such as rice and sugar. Dhows provided cheaper transport than the ferry services and their competition on the main routes grew. In addition to trade in household commodities, Indians used dhows for fishing and fish transportation. Onduru (1992) observes that, Indian fish traders were the main beneficiaries

of the commercialization of the fishing industry in Kenya. Though, there were a few Africans who owned fishing boats and benefited from the trade but, Indians owned a large number of fishing boats, the cold storages for preservation and lorries which they used to transport fish to different market places including Nakuru, Eldoret and Nairobi (Opondo, 2011).

In 1925 six dhows, whose total tonnage was 107 were in use and in 1927, the total number increased to 18 with a total tonnage of 457. It was approximated that by 1927 one dhow was arriving in Bukoba every month making dhow trade popular in Tanganyika waters of the lake with fewer being registered in Uganda and Kenya. Almost all the dhows were owned by Indian traders who were general merchants using dhows for transporting their own merchandise. Although the precise number of merchants involved in dhow trade is not known, but in 1937, 37 merchants owned 81 dhows out of 100 which were in operation. In the same year when the use of dhows in commercial services was approaching its peak, a total £25,000 was invested in dhow trade and 2416 tonnes of commodities were transported by dhows across the lake resulting to an average of 24 tonnes per dhow. By 1940, the use of dhows was much more popular and it is approximated that about 2000 people were employed in dhow trade across Lake Victoria (Ford, 1955; O'Connor, 1965).

The location of Kisumu was strategic to Lake Victoria transport and subsequently trade. Indian traders in the lake region in general and in Kisumu in particular enjoyed the advantage of the lake transport and expanded their trade particularly between 1936 and 1937. For instance, one firm owned 9,721 tonnes out of a total of 19,200 tonnes of goods transported in and out of Kisumu by dhow which made 51 percent of the total dhow trade. Similarly, within Kavirondo Gulf, out of 17 investors trading in the area from Kisumu, there were only six who owned dhows and nine out of the 14 dhows involved were being owned by the same firm referred to above. Taken as an example how the above mentioned firm combined the businesses of general produce merchants and commission agents in Kisumu, Kampala, Mwanza, and Mombasa, with the ownership of two soap factories in Kisumu, and the agencies for two wheat and flour firms in Nairobi and for one of the Uganda sugar factories, it is a demonstration of how traffic to and from Kisumu, Musoma, Mwanza, Port Bell and Jinja could be influenced and controlled and how Indians merchant made the market competitive for other traders (Ford, 1955).

The technology of dhow making was acquired by the African population living around the lake during the colonial period. They have used them both for fishing and transport connecting to different beaches or landing sites much faster (Orucho, O.I., 2021). The people of Asembo connected easily to Seme (Ojowi, O.I., 2020); the people of Karachuonyo particularly next to Kowuor Pier or Homa Hills used dhows to travel to Homa Bay and Uyoma (Ochele, O.I., 2021). Otieno, a former dhow operator at Karungu recounts how they used dhows:

“The use of dhows facilitated the movement of people and cargo between here (Karungu) to other areas such as Aneko, Mohuru and Aluru. It was much better than canoes because it could carry many people, animals like cattle, goats and sheep and other luggage. Its speed was much faster compared to canoes. Much more importantly, it can be driven by sail rather than the human paddles. Moreover, dhows are stable and are not much affected by the currents as canoes (Otieno, O.I., 2021)”.

During the colonial period, dhows were used by the local leadership to patrol and access some regions which otherwise would not be reached by any other means of transport. Moreover, the policy of licensing and registration of transport vessels which was issued in 1908 and 1914 provided the procedure of acquiring of some vessels such as dhows. For instance, the Luo Local Native Council of Southern Kavirondo had to seek authority from the marine superintendent in Kisumu to procure a dhow or a sailing boat for accessing the islands of Mfangano, Rusinga and the main land. The boat would also be used to cross between Kasigunga and Uyoma in Central Kavirondo. The superintendent had to determine a suitable boat and who would undertake to construct it and at what cost (PC/NZA/1/23, 1928). The importance of dhows in the provision transportation reduced since the introduction of engine boats and lake ferries, which are bigger and faster. However, they remained dominant in fishing in addition to canoes (Onyango, O.I., 2021).

After the First World War, maritime transportation improved, and seaborne trade was crucial to Europe during the interwar period because it guaranteed the availability of both completed goods for consumption and raw materials for the factories (O'Brien, 2015). In 1920, the trade improved. However, the ferry traffic on Lake Victoria did not show much improvements in 1921 compared to 1920 as shown by the falling of the cargo received at the port of Kisumu from other lake ports (Table 1.1) and cargo exported from Kisumu to other lake ports (Figure 1.2). This was because of the worldwide trade depression with a remarkable fall in prices in 1920-1921 (Uganda Railways, 1921).

Lake Ports	1919-1920	1920-1921
	Tonnes	Tonnes
Asembo Bay	42	11
Port Sio	184	41
Homa Bay	62	15
Kendu Bay	63	28
Karungu	53	17

Table 1.1: Comparison of tonnages transported from other Lake Ports to Kisumu between 1920 and 1921
 Source: Uganda Railways (1921)

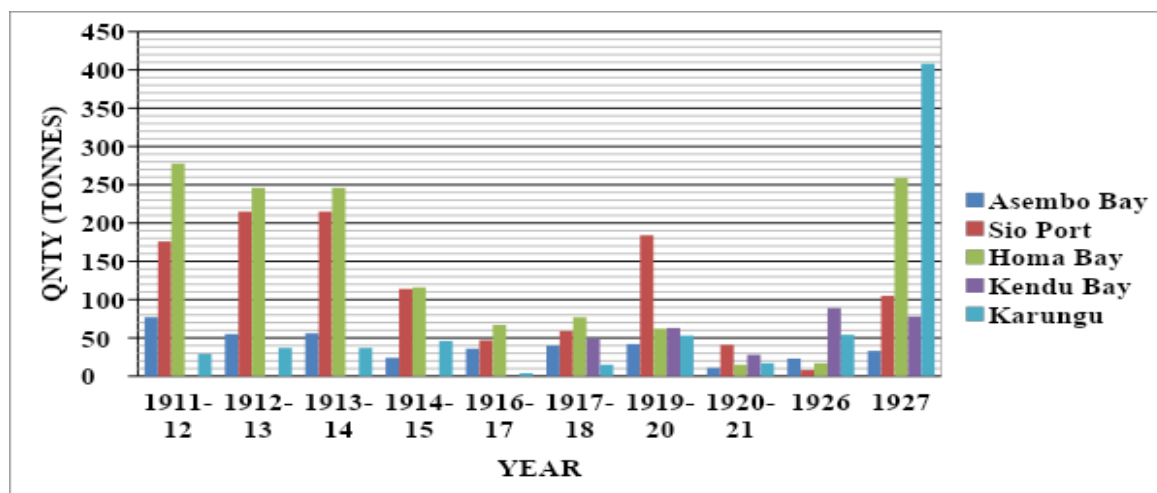


Figure 1.2: Cargo exported from Kisumu to Kavirondo Lake Ports showing a decline in 1921
 Source: Uganda Railways, 1927

The trade was further affected in 1921 when a number of ferries including those were involved in the war including *SS Sybil* and lighter No. 1, were laid up for repair and maintenance (Table 1.2). *SS Nyanza*, *Sybil* and *Winifred* were laid up for the whole year, 1921 (Uganda Railways, 1921).

Vessel	Date Laid Up	Date Resumed
Usoga	11 th September 1920	14 th January 1921
Rusinga	26 th January 1920	31 st March 1921
Kavirondo	21 st April 1920	30 th August 1920
Kavirondo	1 st February 1921	31 st March 1921
Huseni	1 st April 1920	8 th October 1920
Huseni	8 th January 1921	21 st March 1921
Clement Hill	11 th January 1921	22 nd January 1921

Table 1.2: Ferries Laid Up for Repair and Maintenance
 Source: Uganda Railways (1922)

Nevertheless, trade in the lake zone dominated by agricultural produce recovered between 1922 and 1924 from the effects of the war and its outcomes. The total lake traffic in 1922 was almost the same to that of 1913-14. At the end of 1924, traffic had more than doubled-122,517 tonnes in that year and by 1926, it had reached 162,689 tonnes. This recovery was also observed by the increasing of the tonnages exported by other lake ports to Kisumu and the increasing tonnages exported from Kisumu to other lake ports (see Table 1.3). Though the development of Musoma and the Kavirondo Gulf ports were taking shape, but the lack of good transport service in the Gulf must have slowed down the development particularly of the southern ports of Homa Bay and Kendu Bay (Ford, 1955).

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
Inward to Kisumu	24160	73133	87387	84630	72372
Outward from Kisumu	24400	42716	68561	72285	57361

Table 1.3: The increasing traffic passing through Kisumu Port
 Source: Uganda Railways (1927)

The expansion can be linked to the resumption of traffic and the good climatic years, which led to increase in agricultural production especially maize in Kavirondo and expansion of cotton production in Uganda. Similarly, by 1923, there was a substantial increase of cultivation of cotton in different parts of Nyanza (Fern, 1961). As a result, a number of ginneries were established at the lake ports in Kenya (Table 1.4) for processing before its export by the lake (Onduru, 1992). According to Kabasa (O.I., 2021), the farmers transported their cotton through canoes, dhows, donkeys, animal cart and human portage to the government established *store pamba* (buying stores) in designated places next to the farmers for sorting out and weighing. From the stores the government transported cotton by use of lorries to the ginneries for processing before exportation to Kisumu.

Ginnery	Date Established
Kisumu	1910
Sio	1923
Kibos	1923
Asembo	1924
Nambare	1925
Malakasi	1925
Homa Bay	
Kendu Bay	1933

Table 1.4: Cotton Ginneries at the Kenya Lake Ports

Source: Onduru (1992); KNA, TP/5/30,

In 1926, Kenya and Uganda Railways and Hobours (KUR&H) Corporation replaced Uganda Railways and managed railways and Lake Victoria transport from 1927 to 1948 (KUR&H, 1927). Uganda Railways was the first corporation to run railways and Lake Victoria transport. It was founded in 1895 and managed railways and lake transport until 1926 (Mnjama, 1994; Mills & Yonge, 2012). On February 3rd 1926, the Kenya and Uganda (Transport) Order in Council was promulgated and the name of the railways was changed from Uganda Railway to Kenya and Uganda Railway and Hobours (KUR&H) (KUR&H, 1927).

It operated railways, harbours, lake and river ferries in Uganda protectorate and Kenya Colony. The control, management and the working of all the railway, ports, harbours, wharfs and steamship services were vested in the High Commissioner for Transport, who was the governor of Kenya working on behalf of both Kenya and Uganda (Hill, 1976). Extended powers and responsibilities were given to the General Manager of the KUR&H Advisory Council which was created at the same time and was composed of officials and non-official to advice on the management of the railways. Other features of the Order-in-Council included the complete separation between the revenue and expenditure of the Government of Kenya and the revenue and expenditure of the Railways. Port and Lake Services, the creation of separate Railways and Harbours funds, the working of the Railways, Port and other services were to consider the industrial and agricultural development in Kenya and Uganda by providing a cheaper means of transport and the use of profits, interest and sinking charges to reduce railway rates instead of being diverted into other government expenditure (Mnjama, 1994).

KUR&H expanded the lake transport to facilitate both trade and agriculture in the region. The corporation established ports such as Mbita and Kowuor. Similarly, a number of ferries were commissioned (Table 1.4) to meet the demand of transport. For instance, in 1928 an improved tug and lighter service was given to the Kavirondo Gulf area, resulting in a further increase of approximately 593 percent, in the traffic of the ports of the Kavirondo Gulf with Kisumu for 1929 as compared with 1925 (KUR&H, 1940).

Name of the Vessel	Date of Launching	Use
M.V Homa	1938	Cargo
M.V Reli	1947	Passenger and Cargo
M.V Kamongo	1949	Cargo
M.V Cathleen	1949	For Staff

Table 1.5: Ferries Commissioned by KUR&H to Meet the Rising Demand of Transport

Source: KUR&H, 1940

As was anticipated however, the completion of the Kisumu to Butere railway line in 1930 caused a diversion of traffic from Asembo Bay Port and resulted in the sharp decline in the traffic of the local ports of the Gulf in 1930 and 1931. At the same time, the period from 1932 began with the recovery from the depression. The effect of depression on trade, which combined, with the completion of a phase of railway development to

Kampala and Butere, resulted in a great fall in the trade of Lake Victoria, though ports of Homa Bay and Kendu Bay were not as affected as Sio Port and Asembo Bay. The extension of the two railway systems to their termini in 1931 at Kampala and Mwanza resulted in the diversion of much traffic from the lake to the railroads. At the same time, KUR&H was facing competition from dhow traffic managed by the Indian merchants (Ford, 1955).

In order to reduce competition from dhows, the government therefore, prohibited any organisation or private enterprise apart from KUR&H from inter-territorial shipment of goods. At the same time the KUR&H adjusted a change in rating policy with regard to competition with the dhows. For instance, special rates for the transport of maize and maize meal were implemented between Kisumu Port and Karungu Port, Muhuru Bay and Musoma. The policy later became applicable to other commodities including sugar. For the Indians merchants to survive in trade, smuggling became a feature of dhow traffic along the east show of Lake Victoria in 1938 and still subjected the KUR&H to a competition as shown in table 1.5. Much of this dhow traffic was between the three ports: Kisumu, Jinja and Mwanza, with a smaller traffic passing through Port Bell and at Kavirondo Gulf. The primary commodities ferried included grains, sugar, salt, rice, hides, simsim, potatoes, ghee, soap, petrol, kerosene and timber. Sugar from Jinja was carried to Kisumu and Mwanza, and maize, and imported goods forming the return traffic from Kisumu, and rice from Mwanza (KUR&H, 1935).

Year	Transport by Dhows (in Tonnes)	Transport by KUR&H Ferries (in Tonnes)
1933	27929	49039
1934	29360	51257
1935	29471	67853

Table 1.5: Traffic by Dhow on Competitive Routes with KUR&H

Source: KUR&H (1935)

Prior to the Second World War, cotton produce became a marked feature of export from Kavirondo Province, and the importance of Sio Port was primarily as an outlet for the cotton grown in that part of North Kavirondo which lies immediately to its east (Spencer, 1980). Cotton belt also extended through the southern portion of what was Mbale District into that part of Northern and Central Nyanza west of the Nzoia River, which was also served by Sio and Mjanji ports. Similarly, the export traffic that was passing through Kendu Bay, a third-approximately 1,200 tonnes, was also cotton, and at Homa Bay about 700 tonnes of cotton formed between a third and a half of the exports (Ford, 1955). Between 1936 and 1937, the quantity of exported cotton was much higher than other cash crops such as beans, maize, wimbi, simsim and groundnuts (DC/KSI/1/4). Fearn (1961) links this increase to the cotton planting campaigns in 1934 and 1935. The expansion of cotton production in Nyanza (see Figure 1.3) was further motivated by the increase of its price in the market compared with other crops (see Table 1.6) (KNA: DC/KSI/1/4).

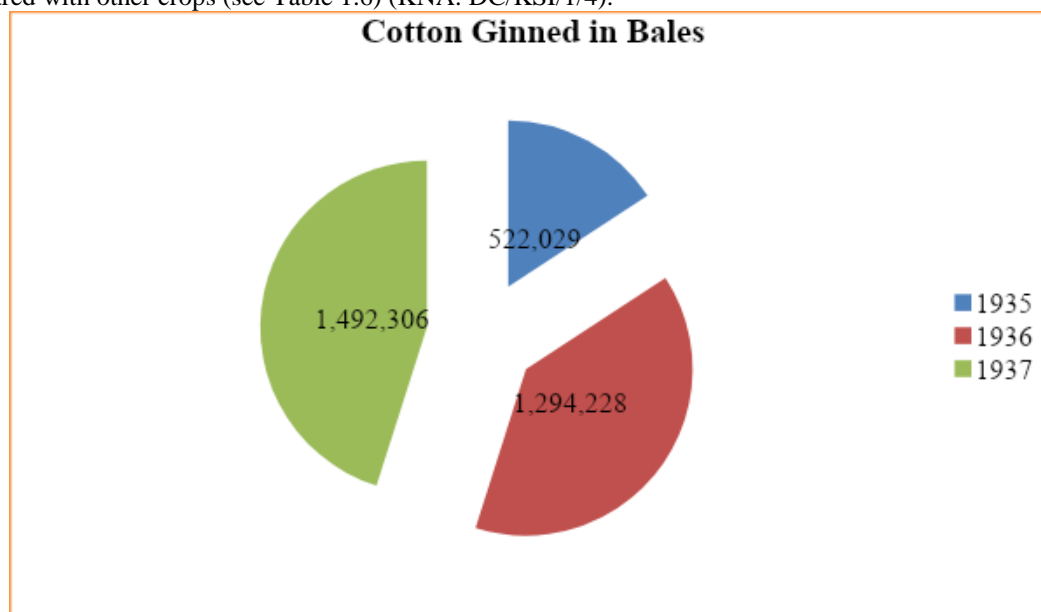


Figure 1.3: Cotton Exported from Nyanza from 1935 to 1937

Source: KNA: BV/6/644

Year	Cotton	Maize	Beans	Groundnuts	Sesame	Millet
1934	11.2	1.17	5.6	6.93	7.15	3.47
1935	8.46	2.2	9.5	10.1	10.1	3.92
1936	11.2	2.48	3.28	10.8	11.34	3.6
1937	8.96	3.57	4.37	7.8	10.44	4.6
1938	10.38	2.2	4.75	5.5	9.09	4.49
Total	50.2	11.62	27.5	41.13	48.12	20.08

Table 1.6: The prices of Selected Crops K£ per tonne from 1934 to 1938 in South Kavirondo District
Source: KNA: DC/KSI/3/5, Kitching (1980)

The increased agricultural production created congestion at the lake ports before they were exported to Kisumu. Kendu Bay Port for instance, became overwhelmed as African grains were decomposing at the Indian stores while a waiting for the arrival of the lighters (PC/NZA 3/22/3). Consequently, Karachounyo Community led by chief Paul Mboya Akoko reported the incidence to the District Commissioner, South Kavirondo in 1932. To remedy the situation District Commissioner sought the authority of the Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza to endeavor to get the KUR&H to establish a go-down at Kendu Bay (PC/NZA 3/22/3). Echoing similar sentiments, in 1935, Indians traders requested the government to improve transport services at Kendu Bay Port for more exports and imports. In the same vein, on 21st February, 1935, members of the Chamber of Commerce, Kisii wrote to Chief Native Commissioner requesting him for more ferry services at Kendu Bay Port. This pressure led to building of large storage go downs and control points at Kendu Bay (see Plate 1.1) and Homa Bay for the maize and other grains including mtama, simsim, wimbi and pulses, all of which pass through Kendu Bay and Homa Bay ports (PC/NZA 3/22/3, 1937).



Plate 3.1: Grain Storage Go downs at Kendu Bay (1937)

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Trade of the lake was recovering rapidly up to 1939 when once again the Second World War interrupted. The comparison of the traffic of 1938 and that of 1932 shows that trade within the lake region had made considerable progress towards recovering the position that existed prior to 1929. Trade in all the lake ports, had not only recovered but also gave evidence of healthy development in all the lake regions as summarised in table 1.7 in tonnes (KUR&H, 1933; 1939) .

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Inward to Kisumu	25813	27672	35145	34247	41329	47785	59174	52744	59951
Outward from Kisumu	15812	9537	9457	11988	20797	27783	29333	29969	28342

Table 1.6: Inward and outward traffic to Kisumu from other lake ports after Depression and Completion of Railroads to Butere and Kampala

Source: KUR&H (1933; 1939)

1.4 Lake Victoria Transport during the Second World War Period, 1939-1944

After the Versailles treaty at the end of the First World War, Tanganyika was declared a mandated territory under the British watch (Tucker, Wood & Murphy, 2018). Thus, the British imperial power alone was in control of the whole of the East Africa, even though the region was divided politically. Therefore, the outbreak of the Second World War did not affect lake transport as it did during the First World War. Nevertheless, trade in Kenya lake ports expanded as shown in table 1.7 showing the export from the lake ports to Kisumu (KUR&H 1946; 1949).

Port	1939	1943	1944	1945	1946
	Tonnes	Tonnes	Tonnes	Tonnes	Tonnes
Kendu Bay	9083	9383	10637	10308	15127
Asembo Bay	1143	918	611	772	643
Homa Bay	2332	3953	4456	5626	6939
Kowuor	533	9641	12805	9155	8481
Total	13091	23969	28509	25861	31190

Table 3.7: Traffic in Kavirondo Province during the Second World War Period

Source: KUR&H (1946)

Much of this export comprised agricultural produce from the lake region and were majorly exported to Europe, but some of them found market in Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa and Kisumu because of large Indian settlements (Fearn, 1961). The traffic at Kowuor Port expanded much during the war period because it was used to export lime from Homa Hills during the war period. However, the traffic at Asembo Bay Port was affected by the extension of railroads passing through Central Kavirondo to Uganda. Thus, the train from 1931 transported much of the export from Central Kavirondo (KUR&H, 1946).

Despite the campaign for the production of industrial commodities during the war period, trade in food crops, cattle and cattle products such as ghee were the dominant export from the Kavirondo area due to the demand of the war. The trade of Ghee for instance was valuable commodity of trade of Lake Victoria. It was a commodity greatly demanded amongst Indians and Africans for cooking purposes. The bulk of its production was in the South Nyanza District and Lake Province of Tanganyika although small amount was produced in Central Nyanza, but was not transported through the lake. Homa Bay Port became very important because of its role as an outlet for the cattle and cattle products in western parts of South Nyanza, where large plains are suitable for cattle production. Other outlets for cattle and cattle products included Musoma for the large cattle region south of the River Mara and Shirati for the cattle area of North Mara. In those districts-South Nyanza, North Mara and Musoma, it was estimated that there were close to one million head of cattle. These areas enjoyed good rainfall and had rivers flowing into Lake Victoria. The production of ghee from South Nyanza area had risen from 27,000 tins in 1935 to 31,000 tins in 1939 exported by the lake (Ford, 1955).

Like the Europeans and Indians, Africans used lake ferries to transport commodities and travel to different places. Obogo (O.I., 2021) a former employee of KUR&H posits that most African travellers consisted of traders, employees of KUR&H and the residents of different towns, Kisumu, Nakuru, Mombasa and Nairobi. Whatever the destination, booking for ferries and train was done at the station where one boarded. For instance, passengers travelling from Kendu Bay to Mombasa would book once at Kendu Bay. Upon reaching Kisumu, they would be transferred to train without rebooking, since railways and lake transport formed KUR&H Corporation. Ojijo (O.I., 2021) observes that employees of the KUR&H were given preferential services including subsidized fare. Onyango (O.I., 2021) recounts that Africans who could afford travelling by ferries enjoyed prestige in the society, since travelling was localized by the use of canoes.

The provincial administration was directly involved in the management of ferry services (PC/NZA/1/23/1928/29). For instance, the Provincial Commissioner, Kisumu and the District Commissioners had the authority of directing the schedule of the ferries and the charges on the services offered. On 5th December, 1927, the Provincial Commissioner, Kisumu issued charges guidelines on some ferries such as *Motor Joan*. The charges were issued according to the race. From then all the Europeans would pay sh6 from Kisumu to Kendu Bay and back, Asians and Arabs sh4 and Africans sh2. The Indians were to be accommodated in the upper deck if there was room in the same way as first class passengers at sh6. Though there were complaints from marine superintendent, Kisumu, but the provincial commissioner directed that the vessel was not profit oriented, instead, it was simply to meet its operation expenses (PC/NZA/1/1927).

The transport services offered by the lake ports attracted bigger populations around the ports. The population comprised of port employees, travellers, traders and other service providers including hand cat operators. The lake ports therefore became a concentration of activities (Obogo, O.I., 2021). As a result, the lake ports were emerging as centres of trade. Local trade was taking place at the lake ports and traders were targeting

the travellers as their customers. Moreover, Indian retailers established their shops at the lake ports, which were emerging as urban centres. Kendu bay, Asembo Bay and Kisumu were dominated by Indian traders who majorly stocked household commodities including soap, sugar, cigarette and sweets and hard ware materials such as iron sheets, nails and ox-drawn plough (Omenya, 2012). Africans sold fish, grains and animal products such milk and ghee. In addition to portage and use of donkeys, traders used canoes to reach the port town centres. The fishers in particular transported their catch using the fishing canoes to the beaches adjacent to ports and turned canoes as shops where they sold the fish (Odidi, K.I.O., 2021). Trade was done in currency (Kenya shilling), however, some form of barter was still witnessed among the Africans (Ogola, K.I.O., 2021).

1.5 Conclusion

The immediate impact of the First World War was the termination of the lake traffic between Tanganyika and Kisumu causing a decline of trade commodities from Tanganyika. Similarly, the export trade of Uganda passing through the port of Kisumu stopped during the month of November and December of 1915. At the same time, there was a decline of passenger and commodity transport across the lake. This was partly due to the fear caused by the war and partly because most of the lake ferries were taken over by the military for the lake patrol services. Among the Africans, the use of canoes remained the main mode of transport and fishing during the war period. During the period of peace, the use of dhows emerged and became popular among the Indian merchants subjecting lake ferries to stiff competition. Moreover, dhows were used by the local leadership to patrol and access some regions which otherwise would not be accessed by any other means of transport. None the less lake transport expanded during the period of peace indicated by the building of more ports and acquiring of more ferries to meet the rising demand of lake transport. Despite the outbreak of the Second World War, Lake Victoria transport was not as affected as during the First World War period.

To meet the rising demand of transport particularly in the lake region, Lake Victoria transport should be revitalized to aid in the transportation of bulky commodities to reduce congestion on the roads. Additionally, Maritime transport on Lake Victoria should be revived to enhance linkages between Kenya and the other countries in the East African region. There is need to give attention and set specific Government policies that govern Lake Victoria transport.

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Oral Informants

NAME	DATE	PLACE	COUNTY
Jowi Mariko	09/08/2021	Asembo	Siaya
Kabasa Rege	05/03/2021	Pala	Homa Bay
Nyakiya Lukas	08/06/2021	Karungu	Migori
Obogo Jack	01/04/2021	Kendu Bay	Homa Bay
Ochele Washington	25/10.2021	Kowuor Pier	Homa Bay
Odidi Nicholas	20/08/2021	Dunga	Kisumu
Ogola Martin	15/05/2021	Homa Bay	Homa Bay
Ojijo Richard	01/04/2021	Kendu Bay	Homa Bay
Onyango Abidha	07/02/2021	Kisumu	Kisumu
Orango Malaki	08/06/2021	Karungu	Migori
Orucho Brian	02/08/2021	Homa Bay	Homa Bay
Otieno Vitalis	08/06/2021	Karungu	Karungu
Ougo Odongo	13/05/2021	Homa Bay	Homa Bay