

A History of Maritime Transport on Lake Victoria (1895-2012)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the history of maritime transport on Lake Victoria within Kenya territory. Lake Victoria transport has a lot of potential that can help solve some of the transport problems experienced along the lake region if effectively exploited. Unfortunately, it has been underutilized as a potential resource in terms of transportation. Since the collapse of East African Community in 1977, lake transport in the region has witnessed radical deterioration and the present bulk transportation system in the region remains inadequate in terms of coverage and capacity to tap on the regional and international markets; thereby reducing economic opportunities. The objectives of this study are: to examine forms of maritime transport on Lake Victoria from 1895 to 1914; to assess the effects of world wars on the development of maritime transport on Lake Victoria (1914-1945); to investigate the maritime transport on Lake Victoria during the post war period (1949 to 1977) and to analyze the decline of Lake Victoria ferry services (1978-2012). The study area included the Lake Victoria ports on the Eastern shores of Western Kenya. Dependency theory has been used to explain and interpret the findings of this study. The theory analyses the concept of unequal exchange, which arose from the manipulation of global commerce by the developed nations for their benefit. Historical Research Design has been used to guide collection and analysis of data in this study. Purposive and snow ball sampling methods were used to identify respondents who included knowledgeable people on maritime transportation of Lake Victoria Kenya from Kisumu, Siaya, Homa Bay and Migori counties. One hundred and five respondents participated in in-depth face to face oral Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Observation method was also used to gather some data. Secondary sources were used to obtain data from books, journals, magazines, unpublished archival materials, and theses and online information from the internet. The data collected was corroborated with primary data. Thematic and content analysis was used to analyze data where the study findings were organized in themes and sub-themes based on the objectives of the study. This study has exposed the level of underdevelopment in Kenyan inland waterways system; hence, provides road map to appropriate measures to remedy the situation. The study established that transport on Lake Victoria Kenya transformed when Luos acquired canoe technology from Uganda and Tanzania. [t also established that during the colonial period in 1880s, Arab slave traders introduced the sailing dhows on Lake Victoria which were later popularized in 1920s by Indian merchants. [inland water transport on Lake Victoria formed an important component of an intermodal supply chain along Central and Northern Corridor linking Mombasa and Dar es Salaam ports but witnessed decline in activities following the collapse of East African Community in 1977. However, lake transport has been rejuvenated in recent times with the introduction of outboard engine boats for passenger and cargo transport across the

lake. The lucrative trade in Nile perch beginning in 1980s attracted the use of outboard engine boats to commercial fishing, challenging the peasants' use of the canoes. The study recommends that the government should improve logistics to promote integrated transport planning and develop proper regulation guiding the inland water transport.